



MY EXPERIENCES WITH MY OWN AND OTHERS' SUICIDALITY

Bartul Marušić

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SUICIDALITY

An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Problem

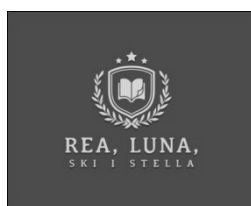


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An Interdisciplinary Analysis of the Problem



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER I: ON EXPERIENCES AND GENERAL
CHARACTERISTICS 16**

CHAPTER II: GENERAL AND LAY PSYCHOLOGY 125

CHAPTER III: SYSTEMIC QUESTIONS 242

**CHAPTER IV: “PHILOSOPHICAL” AND CONCLUDING
ASPECTS 300**

SUMMARY

This book presents an interdisciplinary analysis of the issue of suicide through legal, psychological, theological, philosophical and sociological perspectives. The author seamlessly integrates personal, autobiographical experience with this subject matter into a professional and theoretical framework.

Keywords: suicide, suicidality, psychology, law, sociology, autobiographies, personal experience, suicidology, mental health

"I cry, therefore I AM. I cry for you, therefore you EXIST. A tear is ontologically the most valuable life fluid in a human being."

Bartul Marušić, 12.5.2026.

„Che sarà della mia vita, chi lo sa? Da domani si vedrà. E gli altri partiranno dopo me. Ma tutto passa, tutto se ne va!“, Ricchi e Poveri, **Franco Gatti†** con **Toto Cutugno†**

„Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?“, **Eric Clapton** to **sont**

„...to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.“, **LK 1,79**

„She needs a poet. An artist... someone who understands truth... She needs Thomas Moore.“ **V. Kilmer†**: „The Saint“ and **R.M.†**

*„Light a candle. Lay flowers at the door
For those who were left behind
And the ones who've gone before
But here it comes now. Sure as silence follows rain
... Ever gentle as it kills me where I lay
Who am I to resist?... And now I feel your presence in the way I could not know.
Who are you to fail?... Without you, what's left to believe in.*

*Pictures, black and white, or colour
There's a postcard sent from Heaven
Says, "Make the most of never-never"
Horizon starts right here
The future's always near*

*And I, I know this time is borrowed
I try to remember then forget my sorrow..."*

Out of my mind (Duran, Duran), and Polaroid Millenium from the same (personally important) movie The Saint

BIOGRAPHY AND FOREWORD

Bartul Marušić was born on 20 September 1987 in Split (Republic of Croatia, then Yugoslavia). He attended Vladimir Nazor Primary School in Zagreb, followed by Tituš Brezovački Grammar School, and later the Faculty of Law at the *University of Zagreb*. As a **magister** (Master of Laws), he worked for a period as a **teacher** of law-related subjects and *human rights* at secondary school level, subsequently as a *teaching assistant* at a primary school, and as a *secretary for normative acts* at the **Croatian Nobility Assembly**, where he served as a regular and executive member for one term. He left a specialist postgraduate programme and briefly transferred to a *doctoral programme* in interdisciplinary sciences at *Libertas International University* in Zagreb. During that period, as a **specialist postgraduate student and later as a doctoral candidate**, he wrote and published **seven independent scholarly articles in indexed journals, four professional papers, and two collected volumes of his works, one chapter in the scholarly-historical proceedings of Lokva Rogoznica, and one biographical novel; he also peer-reviewed one article for a domestic/international faculty journal.** The themes spanned mixed fields of law, history, and international relations. Alongside independent work and activities outside his profession, he is an active and accomplished member of **Kinoklub Zagreb** (Zagreb Film Club) and a former *musician* with occasional performances and a festival award, as well as a former *sportsman* (KK Tempo). He has made **three films and one musical album**. He is **married for the second time**, has no children, has no criminal record, and is not a member of any political party. He is a member of two civic *associations* and is not currently in active employment.

Over the past decade, he has formally suffered from *mental difficulties or disorders* rooted in neurodivergence, fragmentation,

and a sensitivity that continues to evolve and shift its clinical presentation, whilst simultaneously producing relatively extended periods of *remission*, *partial improvement*, and *resilience*, or *neuroplastic psychological growth*. It is towards an examination of the struggles and difficulties in which he has been immersed — and which continue to carry stigma and remain poorly understood — that he wishes to direct his present work. He has been diagnosed with the following: ***Acute Psychosis*** and ***Transient Psychotic Disorders***, ***Borderline Personality Disorder*** (exhibiting almost all 9 of the “required” 5 characteristics), ***Cyclothymia***, ***Generalised and Other Anxiety Disorders***, ***Adjustment Disorder***, ***Sub-clinical Depression***, ***“inferiority and superiority complexes”***, ***OCD***, ***Acute Stress Reaction***, and ***Suicidal Episode***. As an ***“atypical psychological profile with high-average non-verbal intelligence”***, he has resolved to translate his “direct insight” and experiences into intellectual work and reasoned analysis. Through this, he aims in his own way to identify the causes or the remedy for certain such states, and to affirm the struggle against the illusion of “helplessness” or the pathological negativity of those states — doing so through an interdisciplinary approach that is both personal and impartial. His thesis is the reconciliation of the individual with oneself, with others, with the system, and above all with life itself, through critical and focused awareness and through the constructive transformation of both the system and the self — neither its collapse nor its idealisation.

.....

“Given my versatility (as both an escape and a remedy), and given the “lostness” that comes with navigating fields of specialisation and the insufficiently developed hybridity of interdisciplinary studies, I decided not to write this book with the intention of producing a *scholarly or professional work*, but rather to present an experience, a personal standpoint, and an argument — as an independent

researcher and writer — without any profit motive, academic benefit, sales objective, or career advancement in view. Accordingly, I have not followed the conventions of a “self-help” book or a lay biography, nor have I adhered strictly to academic methodological rules. This is more of a personal testimony, though the level of the work “resembles” a kind of “personal doctoral thesis” by an academically engaged citizen in the early stages of mature middle age. I do not work for, or within, any institution. This is a personal, existential, and life testament — a dedication to people, to truth, and to family — alongside an observation and study of myself and the life around me. I have not cited sources in the ways I might previously have done, or in the ways I strictly should, nor in footnotes; because unlike my past works, where I began from a body of research and then synthesised conclusions into a given form, here I proceed in the reverse direction — “reinforcing” my own thinking. I do not position myself as someone who “reinforces” others’ arguments or merely compiles directions and results. I am conducting a kind of “living philosophy” — a *scholarly-essayistic* transmission of experience and personal conclusions as a subjective-yet-objective vision of reality and its problems. Basic quotations are placed within inverted commas, whilst *italics* and **bold** denote the emphasis of *terms*, *ideas*, or *constructs* — my own or others’. Where no author is cited, the words are my own, or the paraphrase is sufficiently clear from context. I must therefore transparently explain my method, since from the text it may appear unusual and at times somewhat opaque. I have been guided by an **iterative method** and a variant of **abduction**, but the temporal sequence is as follows. I sought to create a **synthesis** from a **combined inductive-deductive approach**. I proceed, therefore, *inductively and from the particular* — from lived or observed facts, from my own experience and that of others — moving towards *a theory, a conclusion, or a personal position*, which I then *deductively test* and reinforce in the hope of reaching *general conclusions from*

particular phenomena. The research is thus *subsequent* rather than *prior*. This is a method I have almost never employed before, though I have always worked with *hypotheses*. I do not provide full bibliographical details of sources, authors, or others, except where books are concerned, because authors, theories, and schools of thought serve me merely as a scaffolding for connecting or extending experiences and ideas. I use them by citing precisely when referring to a book (and its title), whilst in other cases where I do not cite, the sources are *memory and general education: secondary school textbooks, encyclopaedias, summaries, basic and advanced internet searches*; and, amongst *AI tools*, solely *Claude Sonnet 4.6 or Opus* and the general *AI assistant* (neither ChatGPT nor Ask AI). These are used only for searching and for verifying my own positions. I draw primarily on “major” and older names in order to place myself within a certain intellectual tradition, rather than to claim mastery of the full body of interpretation surrounding their works. I rely only partially on contemporary currents. If I state that Kant is a representative of German Idealism (and then somehow supplement, replace, or even err in this, and end up using expressions such as transcendental and critical idealism, a continuation of rationalism, a moment within the Enlightenment, or anything similar), this is something for which I see no need to cite a source — it is simply an auxiliary element in my thinking, and its accuracy or possible error can be verified. The work is authentic because it also employs a modern approach to research as an example that every tool can serve exclusively as a means to an end, and not merely the reverse. Plagiarism, or the composition of text without one’s own thought and shaping, is something everyone fears and something I condemn — but it can only be done by someone writing not for *general knowledge* but for personal advantage. Even senior students and my grandfather’s colleagues at the faculty would spend hours debating the meanings of *concepts*, and it will certainly not always be easy for me to achieve perfection in

this regard. My late grandfather was precisely someone who insisted on *conceptual precision*, whereas I tend to move as quickly as possible towards substantive conclusions and solutions. Concepts are, in fact, logical constructions of the meanings of words and thoughts — not the reverse — but they can carry multiple deep meanings, of which I am aware; accordingly, I have written neither too hastily nor too superficially. And it is precisely my “free style” of writing and thinking that is evidence of the text’s authenticity and original authorship. This is not a compilatory work but an investigation of multiple aspects connected to a broad and personal subject. The digital age as an adaptation to work — but also as a challenge — is not new, and I still remember when experienced writers, such as my grandfather or my uncle, would receive poor marks because they had written a seminar paper on behalf of one of us. Lecturers assumed it was just another copy downloaded from the internet — and there lies that double misconception. After all, “ghost authors” are the most dangerous category. For me, fortunately, it is both easier and faster to do the work myself. Today, any page of text can be verified by precisely those same tools. Real instances of copying often “pass through” as academic dishonesty, but the essential question is always: “What is the writer’s motive?” The internet has always served as a simplified browser, whereas people formerly went constantly to libraries. My grandfather himself, in retirement, embraced *Google* and basic databases and forums — but his own articles and his *encyclopaedia of sociology* were already early instances of the summarising or faster retrieval of information, and of networking for new generations. It is remarkable that those who engaged in longer and more detailed readings of primary works still knew more than us, or at least connected things at a deeper level — and that knowledge remains inexhaustible even today whilst questions remain unresolved. Yet the scripting and summarising of vast amounts of material has always existed, and is sometimes even formally permitted at certain

universities, as is the “open book method,” where personal creativity and resourcefulness are what matter. Current algorithms are prone to significant errors and require many follow-up prompts. I used approximately **3,000 personally entered (follow-up) questions/prompts on mobile and desktop, 10 books, and various ordinary searches, alongside live conversations**, in order to be able to establish a framework for a demanding subject that will also stand as my lasting mark and legacy. My motivation for this work is entirely different from that which drove me through some compulsory university course or secondary school. Every non-profit or even amateur work is necessarily the product of a life spark and a quest, even if it yields less “profit.” Transparency of methodology must always be stated — even when the method is different and a hybrid — because otherwise the reader will go astray in their understanding. I believe that the conclusions and results are of general importance for this subject. Since I am working without a supervisor, and without the guidance of my late grandfather who has passed away, it is both realistic and possible that errors will occur. However, the thesis is underscored repeatedly throughout the work and runs through it as the book progresses towards its conclusion and my own constructions and sentences.

I hope, nonetheless, that the reader will come to recognise the problems of “one world” — in a book that is also a family legacy and not merely an observational desk exercise. The themes of suicide, life, death, love, knowledge, and forgiveness have always been woven into me as burning questions and the driving forces of my life. I hope I have made at least a small contribution to the struggle for our well-being.” BM

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my grandfather's professor and mentor — his “maker” in the lost and decisive years of his life — the distinguished sociologist of the *London School of Economics and Political Science*, one of the greatest social minds of the twentieth century: **Thomas (Tom) Burton Bottomore**;

To my grandfather's colleague and professor, the most distinguished **Johannes Baptist Karl-Heinz Volkmann-Schluck**, who visited the Marušić family home, and to his wife **Anneliese**, and to their mutual colleague (then already elderly yet still active) **Martin Heidegger**;

To my grandfather's colleague and friend during his time in Germany, late **Johannes Weiss**, who came to visit us at the seaside on numerous occasions together with Prof **R. Lorenz**; to my grandfather's philosophical mentor Prof **Vladimir Filipović**, who was also a private guest in later years; and to all the professors mentioned, or not directly mentioned, throughout this text; to grandpa's dearly missed late friend Prof **Ivan Babić**;

To a friend of my grandmother's, the late poet **Ivan Goran Kovačić**, and to gp's **Tin Ujević**; my Prof **V. Miličić**;

To my late and suddenly departed physician and secondary school teacher, the dear Dr **Vesna Batovanja**, to Prof **Marko Petrak**, and to all my deceased and living teachers in the broader sense: educators, professors, headteachers, spiritual guides, friends, conductors, acquaintances, and colleagues — each of them irreplaceable figures of their own time and of older generations. I would particularly mention my mentors from secondary school and university: **Vera Miljak** and Prof **Davor Derenčinović**;

and to my late grandfather — sociologist, philosopher, teacher, and graduate in Croatian studies — **Prof Dr Ante Marušić** — my supporter and a pioneer of the sociology of knowledge in Croatia — and to all the past and present members of my family.

PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

My “*observational*” philosophy, theology, psychology—or, more simply, my personal essay, my decisions, and my way of life and valuation—is directed towards:

- a personal *agape*, *logos*, and *theoria* drawn from various scholarly disciplines
- through *contemplation* and the presentation of experience
- towards a kind of *synergeia*, *syncretism*, and *eclecticism* with a concrete framework

This written and, to some degree, *soteriological* testimony — connected to the *struggle of the human spirit* — aims to objectively present the information useful to all professions, citizens, and people in crisis (the crises of self-destruction, betrayal, failure, illness, and the confrontation with death or solitude), as well as to people of any persuasion.

*In honour of and advocacy for the fellow millennial **Carlo Acutis**, and for the philosopher **Hannah Arendt** and the “little people”. This work is also dedicated to **Frankl** and his 'unconscious God' within us. While acknowledging Arendt’s view of 'the political' as an essential human space, this book does not shy away from the 'public square'. Instead, it confronts the paradox that our disagreements over the depth of Augustinian *Caritas* reveal, and that every policy and every 'law' ultimately crystallize into an irreconcilable and insufficient human bureaucracy. The bitterness felt by even the most moral believer or philosopher does not stem from the threat of totalitarianism or the fear of death only; rather, it arises from a profound insight into one’s own banality beside moral strengths. And the inevitability of disagreement, and the perceived impossibility of achieving essential, soul-deep change here (while we cannot ever disconnect fear and the unattractiveness of the law of 'moderate reason'). I turned exactly **38**, like Frankl did in the camp, or Kilmer after the release of the Saint, or my grandfather when he received his *phd* and waited an extra year to get it alongside his friend. Interesting mature years. *In bona fide*, Zagreb 2026, Bartul Marušić*

PRELIMINARY NOTE

Several of the works most often cited in this book come not from contemporary editions, university libraries, or online databases, but from my grandfather's **large family library** — old, frequently first editions, in several languages, with the smell of decades and with pages that come loose at the seams. They are valuable precisely because they are *old*, because they bear the marks of the regimes through which they passed, and because they were read and annotated by a man who was himself a thinker. The remainder I have read either in recent Croatian editions borrowed from the City Libraries of Zagreb (KGZ), in personal copies acquired or gifted, or — for the contemporary debate around pessimism and ontology — through reliable academic sources and summaries. I list these here as a quiet defence of authenticity: not everything I know comes from the internet, and not every source needs to be defended by footnote. The book one holds in the hand has a weight that no algorithm can replace.

From my grandfather's library I have used, among others: Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Croatian translation by Viktor Sonnenfeld, edition of **1942**) — acquired by my grandfather during the war and his participation in the National Liberation Movement; the pages already come loose at the seams. What fascinates me about this particular edition is its final page, where the publisher emphasises that the book had been printed in the old (first) Yugoslavia and that he had not been able to take into account "the linguistic regulations that came into force following the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia." A future edition of *The World as Will and Representation* is announced at the bottom of that same page. That small editorial note caught between two regimes is itself worth more than any commentary I could add. I should add, equally, that when I read with my own eyes Schopenhauer's *insults* against colleagues, professors, and especially against Hegel — "fools," "charlatans," "scribblers" — I found them so pretentious and tendentious, even for him at that time, that they became **endearing and amusing**. A living philosophy must be living, not academic.

Further volumes from the same library: G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Croatian translation again by Viktor Sonnenfeld, **Kultura, Zagreb, 1955**, foreword by Vladimir Filipović) — my grandfather's personal annotated copy. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (**Državno izdavačko poduzeće Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1952**). Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, translated by Philip Mairet (**Methuen, London, reprint 1963**) — read in English, one of the reasons the present book is written in English. Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (**Meridian / World Publishing, Cleveland, first printing 1956, seventeenth printing 1963**). Martin Heidegger, *Bitak i vrijeme* (*Being and*

Time, translated from the German by Hrvoje Šarinić, with an introduction by Gajo Petrović, second edition, **Naprijed, Zagreb, 1988**). Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (**Routledge & Kegan Paul, London**) and *Zdravo društvo* (*The Sane Society*, Rad, Belgrade, **1963**). Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (translated by A. A. Brill, **Modern Library / Random House, New York**). T. B. Bottomore, *Elite i društvo* (*Elites and Society*, Sedma sila, Belgrade, **1967**). Ante Fiamengo, *Saint-Simon i Auguste Comte* (Sociološka hrestomatija, **Naprijed, Zagreb, 1987**). And, fittingly closing the long shelf, my grandfather's last published work: *Ante Marušić, Max Weber: o racionalnosti Zapadne kulture putem religije* (vl. naklada, Zagreb, **2017**).

Two further sources do not come from the family library and deserve naming for the directness with which I have used them. Viktor E. Frankl „Čovjekovo traganje za smislom“ I have read in the recent **Croatian edition** from KGZ — to which I refer throughout — rather than in the German or English original; this fact should be reported plainly. And Tomislav Ivančić, *Za umorne* (*For the Weary*) (**Zaklada Tomislav Ivančić, Zagreb, 2023**) — a volume gifted to me, from which my paraphrases of Ivančić in this book are drawn. My grandfather himself once received a different volume of Ivančić's as a personal gift in old hard times — a small detail that pleases me, since these are precisely the kinds of crossings that hold one generation together with the next.

For the contemporary debate around pessimism, ontology, and Mainländer in particular, I have additionally consulted Frederick C. Beiser, *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy* (**Oxford Academic**), whose ninth chapter is devoted entirely to Mainländer, and the scholarly article "*The Ontological Suicide of Philipp Mainländer*" (ResearchGate). For Croatian editions of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (Naklada Breza, translated by Damir Vesely) and Nietzsche's *The Antichrist* (Izvori, Zagreb, translated by Neda Paravić), I have consulted both the volumes and contemporary reference summaries. These I name not as a façade of completeness but as evidence that *a philosophy must be lived, not academic* — and that begins with admitting which physical books one has, in fact, opened, and which one has only heard of. The list is named and verifiable, along with **Ortega** and **Jacoby** books and chapters (in *Croatian*).



CHAPTER I. ON EXPERIENCES AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

CASE STUDY (*“my” expressions, experiences, and types*):

1. CASE: myself and a fellow patient from the hospital; “RELIGIOUS AND PUNITIVE” SUICIDES OR ATTEMPTS/PLANS arising from “despair”

I lived a more or less withdrawn and modest life throughout my entire childhood and adolescence. I was an excellent, and sometimes very good, good, and also “struggling” pupil. I did not engage in vices, and the social circle in which I moved during the school years and holidays was, in fact, very well-raised and went on to be successful. We engaged in the usual sorts of mischief, pursued sports, music, minimal alcohol, video games, falling in love, films, and so forth. In my case, delayed puberty lasted somewhat longer than usual. A more serious crisis took hold of me towards the end of primary school and in the middle of secondary school. At times I was under stress and pressure regarding grades, the future, and university entrance scores, but my upbringing had been infused with both discipline and freedom, and I have no complaint about that to this day. I enrolled — or rather, was enrolled — in schools and a university programme that suited me to a reasonable degree, and I spent my free time thinking about love, music, “fame,” sex, cinematic adventures, leisurely walks, and hobbies. There were no signs of any difficulties whatsoever. In my youth, I visited only a *speech therapist* for concentration difficulties and mild dyslexia in learning. I was ordinarily both lazy and industrious, a last-minute worker and a perfectionist, and someone who is *ambiverted*: loud and witty, quiet and withdrawn, accepted and different. Naturally, I was constrained by not having full freedom — but it was not until my third year

at university that “dark thoughts” began to take hold of me, along with rumination, whilst studying or during breaks when I was not otherwise occupied with composing music, socialising, or watching television series.

Although I was a “lone wolf”, I was not prone to outbursts, and I grew up in a family that was stable, respected, and frugal. There were some internal conflicts, but they left no decisive marks on my childhood. I was an only child, yet not a spoilt one. I lived to see my father return from the war, and my grandmother return to her family home. I later gained a half-sister, though my parents did not separate, and I never regarded that as a “competition or a trauma” — what affected me more were the relationships between the adults around me. There were various “idealistic” acts of self-destruction among certain family members, situations that ended badly — dismissals, court cases — but none of that was my direct concern. As a younger person I was sometimes lazy about ordinary routines, and I would often lose the motivation or the belief that I would ever reach the end of my studies, find employment, achieve success with my songs, or accomplish anything else. I also had a mild social phobia. I would frequently think about themes of war, the phenomenon of evil, and the problem of courtship — of finding the right kindred spirit for a romantic relationship — yet I expected an ideal, peaceful, and interesting future waiting on the other side. I did not think much about death, nor did I experience it as anything other than an interesting abstraction. I was, to a degree, a practising believer. I had long conversations with my grandparents, and later with my father, on all manner of subjects, whilst in my mother I found refuge and love. In my younger years there were adventures with girls, early kissing, and one minor sexual trauma — but throughout secondary school and university, right up until my third year, I had not a single such experience. That said, I did attend a dance class, and there I felt a warm female hand for the first time. An older, attractive girl approached me, and we entered into a relationship that lasted around two months. Dance was a popular pastime at the time, thanks to *Dancing with the Stars*, and I had enough spare time to try my hand at it with cautious

steps. Later in that relationship, however, I developed a complex about not having been the “one” to win her first, and I lost interest. She no longer appealed to me, and our lifestyles were simply different. She was a slightly older hairdresser. I wanted to “pre-empt” being left, so I left her first — and hurt her in doing so. I had not “taken her virginity,” nor she mine, but I parted from her somewhat roughly and only apologised in person several years later. I even had the sense that a certain “karma” followed me afterwards because of that ingratitude. Going out to clubs was not something I enjoyed, nor was I particularly good at it, resourceful, or interested in socialising amid noise and exhaustion until dawn. I was also afraid of violence, and I tended to dress rather modestly. Stress and genetics meant I sweated heavily — at times noticeably so — and I therefore avoided crowds. I both loved and hated school. Yet I was not deprived of anything. In the years before that girl and for a long time afterwards, however, I frequently experienced *depression*, *panic attacks*, “*psychologising*”, and a *pessimistic outlook* on whether I would ever manage to form a romantic, sexual, or marital relationship. Every new examination initially seemed impossible, off-putting, and tedious. But this would last only briefly — like a release valve — and mostly on dark winter evenings. I would try to recover through faith, music, choir, the gym, swimming, and long conversations. Around 2010, I became interested in film editing and putting together compilations of memories for gatherings I organised with colleagues every six months. I was rather extravagant in my jokes and my artistic rebelliousness, and I spent a great deal of time in front of computers during that period. I neglected my studies, knowing I would eventually get stuck on the hardest examination I had faced so far — civil law. Having passed fairly successfully up to that point, I had come to regard the faculty as secondary and easier than love, hobbies, and other interests. The first, second, and then third failure came, culminating in a fail at the examination board resit, and I felt useless and unsuccessful in every area of life. I wanted to give up. I would torment my parents late into the night — and sometimes they me — and I began threatening *suicide*, seeing no way out, finding everything pointless, and suffering some minor physical

ailments alongside. My mother brought alternative energy healers to the house, which I found additionally repellent. Although I did not act on anything concrete, I would walk around the cathedral, announce the “end,” climb a little way up it, test heights, and so on. As I sent messages quoting certain songs — defiance against the world, against women, against lecturers — my mother would often become convinced I was actually going to do it. “I can feel it as a mother — he is going to do it today!” were among her outbursts of fear, panic, and tears, and they would raise the alarm and come looking for me. I did not want that kind of attention, and yet I wanted both power and powerlessness at once — not to have to prove myself any further, because I felt lost and unattractive. The problem was that I had made some attempts with girls at that time, all of which ended very badly, and I would wander the city at night in that dejected state, despite my efforts to reframe it all as “fate.” I would always return home, however, and say that I had not intended to do anything serious. In summer the situation continued, but also improved, because I redirected it into exercise and swimming. I told my father that everything was pointless — I had heard that a young man from a neighbouring village had died in a landslide — and I tried to persuade him to drive the car off a cliff and spare us both the suffering. The biological fact that my parents had “created and raised” me was always, in the end, the logical argument I used to shift the blame onto them, even though I also felt sorry. My father took me to see priests but refused to let my grandfather take me to hospital for treatment, believing that I would calm down once my needs were met — sexual, romantic, social, and academic. I did have some friends. My mother would say she would get out of the car because she did not want to die with us, but with each new day or each small success the situation was genuinely better than those crisis points. My father was a “fighter” and had almost never been suicidal, nor had my grandparents. They did not fully understand what was happening, and despite their shared strictness in important matters, they would, because of me, slip into their own arguments, accusations, and petty rivalries. I made some rash decisions, and at one point I was even banned from filming and from using the computer. That restriction,

however, had the effect of pushing me to finally master and pass that examination, and to make new attempts with girls. Nothing came of it, though, until I met a girl — my future wife — at the *Student Catholic Centre (SKAC)*. Before that, however, I had invited an unknown masseuse to my home, wanting to film a “secret film” and a comic sexual skit for an event, even though I was also afraid of it. I wanted to lose my virginity and, at the same time, preserve it. But I did not know for whom. My first sexual experience came at the age of twenty-three, and I turned it into a kind of “artistic film” that even my parents ended up seeing. They were most upset that I had used alcohol (and not condoms) and had another outburst; the act itself they neither condemned nor encouraged. I felt deep shame — and yet I had wanted to prove my freedom and my “manhood” in exactly that grotesque, bizarre, artistic, and rebellious way. The masseuse was, in fact, a kind and gentle person, and it was the beginning of my education in the “school of life” — in a perhaps impatient and strangely bizarre fashion. But I had also been “patient” for years, even as I failed to achieve my personal goals and hopes. Despite all of that, my activity in music, attendance at lectures, and socialising at the SKAC centre led to my meeting my future partner around a month after that experience with the camera. My wife was, at the time, already engaged — but young and a student. She was studying agronomy near where I was, and she travelled often. She was a year younger than me, yet a year ahead academically, whilst I was a student taking exams partially and part-time across years. I gave her time to decide, though I was of course rooting for us and winning her over with songs. She chose me. Our relationship was very deep; we spoke and saw each other for hours every day. We had the same tastes, but she was also frequently nervous, hypersensitive, and emotional — much like me, if not more so. Shared tastes in music, film, and faith, along with long conversations and occasional student jobs together, created something more like a forbidden student love affair and an “image of the ideal” than a mature love. But love existed in every one of its elements. We were already planning children and thinking up names, though we were careful. We tried to abstain from physical relations at times and did not live together, but she would stay

over at mine and we would go to the seaside together. As a person she was wonderful, gentle, hardworking, and intelligent — though also hyperactive. We “needed” each other then, and she had her own family traumas. I was somewhat more passive, because I had to study for more than six or seven hours at a time to maintain any kind of pace with the material before deadlines. The curriculum was not illogical, but the faculty was genuinely more about rote learning than practical application. That did at least free up time around lectures and allowed me to visit the library more often, though I lacked contact with lecturers or fellow students. She, for her part, loved my artistic side and my rural Dalmatian roots, and we went together on spiritual retreats, trips, and examinations. Our relationship, including the marriage, lasted ten years from my twenty-third year. They were not ten ugly years, but ten beautiful ones, during which I believed such a bond to be *unbreakable*. I expected nothing bad — and successes kept coming. We attended each other’s lectures, received good marks and awards; I performed at a festival and on television and delivered a seminar paper at the Inter-University Centre (IUC) in Dubrovnik. We were always going on trips, to restaurants and cinemas, to her village, and we socialised with each other’s friends. We loved animals, filmed a music video, and I even relaxed enough to put on some weight. Romance was a vital foundation for us, but so was a constant sense of conscience. We progressed to the point where I was the first to find employment after the wedding, as a teacher, and enrolled in postgraduate studies. Her jobs, having been tied to student success, were drying up, and it took a few years before she found permanent work. She also went through many exploitative jobs in which she was demeaned as a woman considered weaker. I then resigned from school, and that was where the change began. I felt the burden of having gone from a struggling pupil and student to a “professor,” and I could see it was not going to work. What interested me was only how much further I could advance in scholarship; I was preoccupied with our noble ancestry, archives, and related matters. Later we worked on the family farm at her place and mine in the village, which I saw as an opportunity to improve my physical health, get more active, and be less nervous. My behaviour at

times bordered on outbursts and erratic conduct, whilst her constant dissatisfaction — with the many obligations and family relationships — resulted in latent threats, negativity, and difficulties that were subtle yet psychologically heavy. I had grown accustomed to “fighting in peace and quiet.” I would listen to music to unwind. Conflicts did arise at times, and during my student years my father had even temporarily thrown me out of the house because of it — believing that I was the one first stirring tension in telephone calls with her, and that I had at one point gone to her home to confront her former boyfriend, who had himself threatened suicide after she ended their relationship. In his uncertainty, he even called the police at the time, and so on. I also had some friction with her brother-in-law, to the point where we considered hiring security for the wedding (he attacked me drunk at baptism). With her sister-in-law and the extended in-law family the atmosphere was tense as well, with conversation limited to zealous religious talk — yet to the outside world we were a genuinely harmonious couple whom they supported. We were known precisely for that emotional passion, for our “cinematic behaviour,” our mutual understanding, versatile ability, humour, and love. Our characters were, in truth, similar — in both good and bad — and charged with energy. I would not call it a “toxic” relationship in today’s popular sense. Rather, behind a sincere and cultivated love lay a toxic undercurrent, or an unexpected future. But, as she herself later mentioned in the divorce proceedings, I genuinely did have certain strange, “unprovoked” *outbursts* during periods of fatigue or weak psychological “phases.” I frequently felt a complex of *inexperience* and rejection from past encounters with girls, and the weight of having to bear responsibility for her breaking off her previous relationship and engagement and abandoning her plans. She probably felt the same yoke on my behalf. Concealing ourselves from the village, from people, from the need to explain ourselves — in the beginning that felt like an adventure; later, it became a burden. And my grandparents, too, were often “behind the scenes” with their own intrigues.

There were times when I would *cut my arm, throw things, scream, and make threats into the air*. I even gave her a *bloodied handkerchief* as a “keepsake,” and afterwards I would wear a small bandage. At SKAC, they joked that I did not know how to cut myself properly — that it should be done vertically, not horizontally. Even the priest laughed, though none of them knew that I had genuinely been acting out semi-suicidal excesses; they only later began to notice that I was somewhat unstable. I would hold my hand in a flame to see how long I could endure it. At one wedding, due to certain “tics” and unintentional “mocking” by others, I *beat myself*. They had to remove me from the wedding, console me, and take me home. They sought help from a shared priest, because I had genuinely, through fatigue (which is often my “trigger”), a viral illness, and a failed examination, had an “attack.” But *I knew* what I was doing, and alcohol was not the deciding factor, as they believed — I had only just begun to drink at all. In fact, alcohol had previously had a calming, positive effect on me. It was a conscious redirecting of negative energy against myself, even at the cost of humiliation. I *slapped, punched, and hit myself* to such an extent that I had bruises and swelling for days afterwards. She forgave me, but I promised it would not happen again. I would also, at times, grope or flirt with other girls in front of her, and make strange jokes — yet she offered me support and consoled me, both from myself and from herself. In general, going forward, we would have long conversations and go out into the fresh air, but we did not seek professional help because all of it lasted “only” acutely. Some people thought I was taking drugs, though I had never touched them — never even smoked a cigarette or cannabis. Nor had I ever been involved in fights, theft, or anything of that sort. The only things I did were gamble for a short period and stay up late at the computer. After our wedding I had another outburst from exhaustion — I had tried to organise everything as well as possible, and the stress of so many familiar faces was overwhelming; I even sang for them at the reception. Around that time I graduated with an excellent mark and a commendation, she was present, and our plans and future were developing in a good direction after 2016. As a teacher at school, I had an unusual, humorous approach to lessons and some

“exclusive” topics and fixations, but I was genuinely liked — by pupils, colleagues, and the headmistress alike — and I never “crossed any boundaries,” nor did I intend to. What they did notice was my “touchiness,” my instability, my fear of bureaucratic demands and committees, and my desire for further titles and for a “learned” independence. Yet that position of mine — despite the modest salary and limited hours — ran counter to my old way of life and self-perception. I had genuinely earned everything through my own effort, and people recognised that. But for me, it all felt either temporary, or “forced,” or simply not a source of satisfaction. I had no desire to build a career after so many years of exhausting work on academic detail and private struggles. I even quarrelled with certain lecturers during examinations I had to sit to make up the differences between programmes, and I decided to leave before something worse happened. I felt as though I had reached a *peak* in my life from which I could only fall again before climbing once more. That awareness only deepened my disillusionment, made me reckless, and I even began contemplating suicide — precisely so that this “peak would not be spoiled.” I had, in truth, achieved my dreams, or at least seen what they looked like, and I wanted to end things in a state of contentment rather than “begin” my life story and struggle all over again. On top of that, I was developing problems with my veins, a hernia, obesity, and so forth. I felt that there were more important things to attend to — or that it was simply not realistic for me either to fail so completely or to succeed so “far.” For without my grandfather’s help at home, I would not have passed the entrance examination, nor had enough points to enrol at the faculty at all. I had never received anything through connections (fortunately), but my sedentary and withdrawn way of life could not be reconciled with the new reality — whether in a classroom and offices or in physical outdoor work. I felt that the *reward* for my years of study was simultaneously a cyclical *punishment* — and that sooner or later it would be discovered that I was no married teacher, lawyer, postgraduate student, and nobleman, but an ordinary “pupil” in permanent crisis. Someone who had been teased,

belittled, had books and tickets stolen from him, and was occasionally beaten.

These traits were noted even by the teachers with whom I had to attend pedagogical retraining courses, though I would also receive good marks from them. My presence was not dangerous or toxic, but it was “unpredictable” — less so to others than to myself. I said so plainly on one occasion: “I am not going to cause any trouble; I may simply leave if a day of total saturation comes over me.” When they later told me that my fear of failure, dismissal, or abandonment was a result of my borderline personality — that I was constantly working to undermine my own (nearly achieved) self — I saw in it, rather, real dangers that life frequently confirmed. Yet I was equally capable of “switching” and recovering quickly. My way of thinking and living was something people found genuinely attractive, sensible, and endearing. They could see that I concealed no narcissistic traits, though they also regarded me with a kind of compassionate puzzlement — as an unknown quantity engaged in a self-critical yet helpless struggle with itself. I always had family support, and my scholarly articles were not sufficient to exempt me from the remaining years of study, but they were independent works produced by an ordinary “good” student rather than an outstanding one — taken as a whole. My grades depended on my interests and on my physical energy or willpower, because during episodes of lethargy and melancholy I would sleep for days without studying. Out of frustration or disappointment I reached a point where I tore up my diploma and textbooks and returned them to the faculty, and complained to editors that I was “suffering” throughout the entire process. I had also set my goals far too high — as though I were the only one in such a position. I assumed I would arrive by momentum at a secure position, carried along by the wind at my back. My professor was watching to see whether I might achieve a “cum laude”, without actually knowing that I was not particularly close to it. But I had “something”, and within a somewhat longer timeframe I would have achieved nearly everything I had personally and professionally set out to do. My grandfather believed this would be the

beginning of my career, not the beginning of what he called “dabbling in everything” — though that dabbling was not purely dilettantism in the negative sense of the word. When I answered questions in examinations or at job interviews, I genuinely believed what I was saying. That is why I performed well in interviews too. But as I waited for the outcomes of those postgraduate studies, my depression returned and I decided, for a change, to take up manual trades. I spent most of my subsequent time at home with my wife, renting a flat, studying the Bible, going for walks, visiting the shop, and looking after the cat (Felix) while she went to work every morning and looked at me “like a child rather than a husband.” I did work, though — as a waiter, on building sites, as a painter — without making a point of it, but I never stayed anywhere for long. My wife spent her weekends looking after children and visiting her parents while I “tried to find myself” after the weight of dismissals, and our lives began to grow complicated. I felt I was not fulfilling my role as a husband. I never found employment in my field again, though I sent applications to law firms as well, and I lacked the will to persist. My wife wanted a child at any cost, and I do not blame her. We attended check-ups; I tried to keep a clear head and body during intercourse and took zinc and selenium supplements, but despite genuine improvements in my fertility and sperm motility, conception never occurred. She did not want to leave me until she had “confirmed” that there would be neither a child nor a career nor stability from me. She decided to leave when we were due to return to live in my family’s flat. She left me at the seaside, without an argument or any warning, because she no longer wanted to drive me to Dalmatia — where I had been occupying myself with “therapeutic” work and with ideas about securing a future through winemaking, tourism, and agriculture in the open air. Although we had tried that path too, the long journey, those changes, and the loss of funds for the rented flat brought the marriage to its end.

My grandfather was still able to help, so that she would not have to carry everything alone, and I continued working in plastering. But no specific cause was needed for the collapse any longer — she had assessed

the situation as a whole and concluded that she no longer “loved” me and that continuing was not worth it after so many years. Although I believed I would recover, or that my way of life had simply always been this way and that she was being hypocritical about it, I was not suicidal or deeply depressed afterwards. I was sad and shaken. I channelled all of that energy back into work at the seaside, (successful) sport, amateur film editing, and occasional house painting. But I was shocked by the wealth of good things and shared similarities we had left behind, and I devoted myself to caring for my dying grandfather. At the same time came the earthquake, the pandemic, deaths and illnesses in the family, and one affair and betrayal of my own — and everything came due at once. Even so, I believed she would return to me and I never fully grasped the reasons, because we had still gone to church together and searched for jobs for me, and I always gave her whatever I earned. I was open to outside help, and in fact we were not even arguing at that time. I was open to life and perhaps somewhat fervently religious, but through that I was active, lost weight, exercised, and so on. Her telephone call caught me off guard at the seaside, and because of a *threat* I ended up in custody, driven back to Zagreb across the length of Croatia — though I was not charged, and I never sought her out or contacted her again. This shocked me further, because we had still been exchanging messages and speaking for days beforehand, and instead of aggression I had turned to self-pity and pleas for forgiveness. It came out of nowhere, while I was there thinking about other things entirely. It was a carefully planned “ripping off the plaster,” though she herself had been uncertain how to go about it — especially if I were to come back. In the days before, she had been calling and telling me she loved me, but she had judged the timing well. She had been taking things from my family home and saying her goodbyes to my parents without my knowledge. I had, however, noticed something odd. I had seen beforehand that she had been in contact with my cousin, who had visited us and whom we had visited, and who had attended our wedding. It never crossed my mind that she would — later — marry him and have a child with him: my cousin. So my promise to “accept her future child as my own” is not entirely far from the

literal truth. Today I am even glad for all of them, and yet I cannot justify that decision. I bore it stoically, with forgiveness and strength, and I later turned it into a “film screenplay” and received an award for it. Why? Because I did not fall apart. Instead — searching for a new partner in every way, carrying the old ring and enduring every disappointment — I found, just as that news came to light, a wonderful new wife. She, during an unexpected visit we paid there, promised she would never leave me as my previous wife had.

We met through an advertisement and in a café, two years after the separation. I looked exhausted, but also “strong,” and her slightly older age did not bother me — we connected on every level, recognising in each other that “free spirit” and a past that was not a burden but a new freedom. We also recognised stability, maturity, and shared interests, and the outbursts were almost entirely absent, or very rare. It was not only that I had grown more composed — I simply had less need for it. Although we married, the Church has not yet recognised the new marriage, even though both wives gave entirely contradictory testimony about me within the space of only a few years. I have now been in this new marriage and relationship for four years; everything moved quickly and we live together. We did not wait at every stage for a century, which is why it may have appeared that we “rushed.” But time is on our side in demonstrating the quality of the relationship. At present we live alone and receive some social assistance; she also has a disability allowance, whilst my family still has some modest savings. We rented out a small seaside apartment for a period, but then came a new illness in the family, a tax reform, and a fire. My mental state deteriorated again as a result, but *depression and suicidality* have not returned, or only in the faintest traces. She too had a history of “irregular” things, but she was sincere and unspoilt. Although she can sometimes seem a little irresponsible to me, she is very intelligent, loyal, hardworking, and shares similar values — straightforward and wonderful, which is why her body too looks considerably younger than her years. She has also been diagnosed with one more serious *mental disorder*,

different from mine, and in a way we complement each other. We have found the medications that suit us and the hobbies that work for us, and since she too has been “experienced” in all manner of things — including caring for pets — I believe we will not fall apart. Despite the anxiety and fear of interpersonal relationships, the future is still ahead of us, and not only in a material sense.

As in the previous relationship, there have again been many achievements and successes, and I no longer yearn for my former wife. But I carry both of them in my heart, so as not to be inconsistent with myself — and that was where it was hardest to remain firm. In my final message to my former wife I said I would leave something to her son, which she may well have interpreted as yet another threat. I meant property or a dedication. And now I am even glad for my cousin — that he has finally gained a male heir and that they live closer to one another. He is a cousin through my grandmother, who was originally from the Turopolje region, so they do not need to travel far to see each other. Being from the coast, as I am, is not only a privilege but also a burden and an expense. I found out about her new marriage entirely by chance when I visited that cousin’s family to collect some church documents in the place where I was baptised — and through those documents I could see that she had already been investigating. I was puzzled by why they seemed afraid of me and looked at me strangely. In a sense, that was not only a cinematic storyline but also a continuation of my previous book, *Initium*, in which I had foreshadowed the arrival of a new life and written about “beginnings” and the history of our lineage — before the “little one” came into the world. But I never suspected that child would not be “mine,” though in theory it perhaps even is, if the child is as old as our separation. I seem to have skipped a chapter, have I not?

Before the separation and the departure to the seaside, during my period of unemployment while we were living in Jarun, I reached, in the autumn, the peak of that second *life crisis with depression*. It lasted perhaps a few weeks. Both she and my godmother supported me, and I was

constantly sending messages. It was not always clear, however, when it was serious and when it was not. In that phase, my wife had not yet left me nor condemned me. In September, she received a serious call at work: *Come home — your husband wants to kill himself, or may already have injured himself*. Shaken, though she rang me — as did the priest, my godmother, and my father — she came home. I was not in the flat, and they did not break in until she and I arrived. When I entered the flat, she looked at me calmly from the living room and greeted me warmly. I walked in and asked how she had already got back. Then, from the bathroom, I saw a young policeman approaching from behind, and another from the right, from the living room (or from behind the curtain). I knew “what time it was.” They said I had nowhere to go. I did not try to run or resist — I put down my rucksack, raised my hands, and sat on a stool. They calmed down and came closer. They searched the bag, found no weapon, and my wife spent the whole time asking where the cat (Felix) was — the police even helped look for him. She was afraid I might have harmed him. I had done nothing to Felix, of course, and I was not angry at her or at whoever had called for help. At that moment I did not know who had called, though I could guess that the most seriously taken call for help had come from my religious education teacher from secondary school — because I had seen him in person recently and given him a bottle of wine as a belated thank-you I had planned since my final year of school. For the others I knew they would not react, and I had even thought no one would. That is why I was not angry at the teacher — as he himself feared — but on the contrary, I was glad that someone was genuinely concerned and took my words seriously. Though I also recognised the “danger” of those same words. The poor cat had hidden behind the wardrobe and the television curtain.

After that they told me to calm down — that they knew I was “aggrieved” about something and that they wanted to talk it through calmly. I had in fact been calm throughout. But when they asked whether I wanted to do it — and why I had wanted to hurt myself — and whether I would try again, I said that I would plan or attempt it again if the

opportunity arose. At that point the young policeman flushed, stood up, took his walkie-talkie, called the emergency services and reported the situation to the station, then told me that in that case I would have to come with them or would be taken by force. Although I had never had trouble with the police before, I also respected and feared them, and it did not occur to me to refuse. I even regarded it, perhaps, as something of an adventure. We agreed on what I was allowed to take with me. The ambulance arrived downstairs; they put a mask on my face and measured my pulse. I believe they let me go in alone and that the police did not follow, or perhaps they met us there and brought me to the main reception of Jankomir. There they left me and I waited in a queue to see the admitting doctor. She asked me first: did I wish to stay voluntarily? "I have no objection." She entered my symptoms into the computer, along with my statement that "those who threaten and announce suicide, or speak of it openly, are often precisely those who eventually carry it out — not the reverse." I had read that somewhere around that time. When I went upstairs, the door locked behind me and I was given white clothes. They drew blood, questioned me, observed me. I attended tests, measurements, examinations, and all the procedures; the technicians and nurses were pleasant, warm, and empathetic people who later played table tennis with us. There was no aggression from anyone, or none that I witnessed. They even watched celebrity programmes on their computers and chatted among themselves, but they respected each other and respected us as patients.

The only thing I feared — from the staff — was the medication, and from the doctors, the diagnoses they would give us without our even knowing. I was first placed in a room with one other patient who had arrived in a state of crisis, and later, as I recall, into a three-bed room with him. I was not yet allowed outside, nor was it easy to leave — entering such places is difficult enough, but leaving is harder still. I could only walk the corridors as far as the library, the bathroom, or the smoking room, and even that was checked at times. They would note why I was talking to

myself, exercising, praying, or staying too long in the bathroom. I did, however, regularly attend the gym sessions where we helped one another, and later the social workshops, where the social worker was respected by everyone — even by those with no motivation to participate. The atmosphere was controlled in that way, yet not excessively so from the outside. Given what I had expected, it was in fact a pleasant surprise. Everyone would share their story, explain their tasks and their reasons. Some had problems with drugs, some with other things — but I found myself looking forward to those activities more than to the dull afternoons. We were allowed our mobile phones at times. And I felt, simultaneously, a sense of peace, company, and order — like a school without grades — and on the other hand a *claustrophobia* that I felt I had brought on myself, despite not being in such a bad state. I was determined to leave at some point, after a few days of reflection, because I was afraid of staying forever or perhaps being held by force. Even as a lawyer I did not know my rights and obligations there, nor did it concern me greatly. I was not even pretending to feel better — I genuinely had a bright spirit, because I was looking forward to leaving and to the plan of returning to painting work rather than languishing at the mercy of myself and the hospital. I would watch my wife through the window when she came to visit, waving and jumping below. She brought plenty of clothes and food. The food there was good as well. The intelligence tests, which I had always disliked, I filled in with genuine enthusiasm; and I could barely wait to tell my story and see all my conditions laid out before me. I had some unusual questions, but I directed all the consultations and conversations with the doctors towards a broad account of family history and anamnesis — the relationships with my parents, the fact that my grandfather had wanted to adopt me exclusively and steer me only towards an academic career, and so on. I was honest and critical in acknowledging that I had not managed the role of a married, graduated, responsible employed or unemployed adult, and I wanted to acknowledge my flaws and shortcomings without shame. I wanted a plan for the future. What occasionally irritated me was when the conversation was steered towards my sexuality. I felt I knew best the causes within

myself and was not embarrassed to analyse them. The doctor — a female doctor — did not dismiss this, but was probably looking for other “gaps” and conventional explanations. Searching for concealed causes and motives often reveals nothing more insightful than what lies on the surface. Frequently the problem is genuinely tangible and can be summed up in a few sentences, with the rest being causal elaboration. I hold that view to this day, and I believe that human character and circumstance are not exclusively the product of illness and poor outlook. The doctors too, of course, need something concrete for a diagnosis and a plan — but neither was any much graver diagnosis “invented” or confirmed beyond what I was later “given.” The main point was that “external voices,” opiates, aggression, and other such elements had been excluded, and they said they would “follow my progress.” As don Stojić once said — in work and in its absence often lies the central and decisive problem behind all other problems. He too did not simply analyse causes in terms of “demons,” but he did recognise the precursor to later ones. I was not, in truth, lazy — I simply had no firm plan for where to direct my working energy, or whether I was even obliged to direct it where society wished rather than where I myself wished. I enjoyed, for instance, sitting on a bench outside a shop, under the shade of trees near the market, choosing furniture for the seaside house. I even met some interesting people there who likewise spent time on the street but were not necessarily “drunkards.”

I spoke of faith openly, and that was received with something like a positive impression. Because as they read my reactions, so I read theirs. But my goal was nothing other than to get outside for a break first, and into the fresh air. At that point I had no intention of escaping at the first opportunity or doing anything else — my aim was simply to reach a free weekend by the normal route and probably not return. That is how it ended. But not only out of fear of the doctors, rebellion, or boredom — there were also the medications, some of which gave me headaches and which I did not dare say so, and so I would half-swallow them or spit them out, feeling again as if I were in my own kind of “film.” Nor was I told that the therapy could at

least be discussed. When they asked how I was, I did not want to emphasise anything negative, which also struck them as odd — though they could see I was not lying either. During the empty stretches of the day we mostly walked in circles along the corridor, and through a window I could see a church in the distance. I thought about my family and what they must be thinking. I recalled a short novel by Zlatko Krilić about life in a hospital, and also my own time as a child during the war years, when I had been admitted for operations and had a wonderful and supportive relationship with the other children. We had our little “adventures” then too — evading nurses and so on. I also thought of the nursery that no longer exists, which I had both loved and hated but which had “socialised” me. I had liked giving the other children water to drink and comforting them before their operations, because it made me feel like an older brother. In doing so I forgot my own condition and fears. A beautiful kind of love forms in those moments. Something similar was happening now. The young man who had first been placed with me — and with whom I became acquainted — had attempted suicide by medication. He had overdosed, but his mother found him and he was brought in by helicopter. He said the last thing he remembered was a tremendous *metallic roar* in his ears. He recovered quickly and was a very polite, “intelligent,” courteous, and pleasant person. He had studied theology, and we quickly became friends and found common ground. But he was not fanatical — in fact, he disliked that, and so did I in truth. He had simply had “enough of everything”: his diagnoses, his life with his mother, and he had wanted to “cut ties with it all” and go to the very end. He was not in a relationship, as far as I recall, though he did not emphasise that as a motive for any grief. Some of us were in relationships, as was I. He said he would not repeat it. He believed that “God is strict” and that we cannot meet His standards, that He is in some sense punishing us and has “messed us all up.” He repeated this often. And I too had wanted, in truth, to *punish myself out of a sense of conscience — towards society, my wife, God, and my parents* — whilst holding myself, God, and society equally responsible. I did not blame my wife, nor any individual institution of society. I was already planning what I would do

afterwards, and no one — inside or out — was actually mocking me, which was a small comfort.

Later, my wife brought up that crisis episode and used it as one of the key reasons for her eventual departure. I knew approximately why each of the others had come to the hospital and how many times, as there were many who returned. They mostly kept the details to themselves, and it was often their “family” who had reported them or sent them to receive help. It seemed to me that in their cases too it was more a matter of fear and perfectionism than any escalation of violence or criminal behaviour. Everyone was quiet at breakfast in the morning, loosening up a little before it, and one woman would make our beds and encourage us with jokes and warmth. A technician even told me: “This too shall all resolve itself...” We would wait for rounds and in the evenings watch television and talk. Strangely, the noise did not bother me, or I would ask them to turn the television down when I was already drowsy. And they, for their part, were not bothered by one another breaking wind or similar things. But we all respected each other. I would observe the other people — good-looking young men and women on other wards — and also a young man who was developmentally delayed and entirely calm. He struck me as somehow endearing and pitiable. I had previously assumed that such places held only critical cases or people with intellectual disabilities. In reality, most were sensible young people from various walks of life, sharing humane advice about work, about life, about how to get things done. Two in particular stood out, who later also looked out for the rest of us. That protective and positively hierarchical approach is, in fact, very therapeutic and very contemporary — and no one had “taught” us to be that way. To what extent fears — concrete or abstract — or upbringing and reason had played a role in each person, I could not say individually. I believe I was among the first to leave, after two or three weeks, though there had already been some changes in the meantime. Some form bonds that last “across generations.” My theology colleague stayed a little longer, and we exchanged a message at Christmas. He always said that “we with a

diagnosis always end up drawing the short straw.” But it seemed to me that he too had stabilised and had a clear plan for what was ahead. I left with my wife and we went out for dinner immediately after my first weekend pass. Since my father came to collect me, that family support and assumption of responsibility was already the tacit beginning of departure, and the discharge notes stated that my condition had partially improved. I was again afraid of the police or a call from the hospital ordering me to return, once they realised I had no intention of going back, and my lower lip began to tremble uncontrollably...

Before all of that I had first been on day passes, which I will say a little more about later. While we were in the hospital, we talked about our lives, our faculties, faith, sport, and books from the reading room. There happened to be a book about the escapades of Don Juan in the display case, and we laughed at that — because the third roommate said he had died laughing reading it, given that the character had “slept with” everyone he came across, including his own relatives. There was not much demanding literature on offer, and perhaps it would not have drawn me in anyway. Everything felt rather “childlike.” The book itself did not interest me as much as the humour and the general idea of a sexuality that had not occurred to me until then. Although there was attractive staff, I tried not to think about that too much, and the social worker even mentioned having coffee with someone — though I had no idea what was actually permitted, nor did it occur to me to acquire new labels through the corridors. Among us roommates there were no individual or mutual sexual acts, and what happened in the bathrooms I cannot say. I think I did not relieve myself even once during that time, or perhaps only once. A certain peace and order prevailed, and the food was good — though we were also somewhat wary of each other, as if we were in a prison, which we were not. The television running during the day seemed relaxing but to my mind slightly odd. I had never watched television all day, nor had that been my habit before. When we went out into the fresh air for a walk — when I received permission, which I had no wish to abuse for my own sake or theirs — a

new friend of mine, who was quite “deep” in thought but not intrusive, told us to *follow and observe the signs* around us. By that he did not mean something paranormal — that is often a misunderstanding. Rather, he looked at the world “hypernormally,” as I sometimes had. That is why I did not agree with the diagnosis of psychosis, though I did agree with its acute qualifier and with the adjustment disorder. He said that life, the environment, and nature *show us everything*, only that one must see it in time. I separated from the group exactly five minutes before the end of the break and walked to the church, thinking there might be a Mass or that it would be open for a brief prayer. Near the benches stood a *headless cross*, and that struck me as a somewhat “suspicious sign.” I sat on a bench regardless and meditated, since the chapel was closed and there was no Mass. Then, from behind, there suddenly appeared a slightly older woman with short blonde hair who smelled strongly of cigarette smoke, or so I sensed. She sat beside me — or I offered her the space — and began asking me about Masses or some other hospital matters. She said she was quite well-off, living alone in Dubrovnik, but had suffered from insomnia for a long time. Her daughter lived with a boyfriend. Since time was running out and we were alone, I wanted to “dismiss” her — and I tried to do so by telling her I did not feel like hearing about illnesses just then, but that if she wished she could *cuddle* with me a little, since I had been shut in for so long and had had no physical contact with anyone, not even my wife. To my surprise, she agreed — and eagerly so. It caught me off guard; she had clearly taken to me immediately, though I also felt a sense of conscience, being married, and had no wish to repeat a short-term “betrayal.” But I placed her hand on my leg. I told her implicitly that I had not “released” anything in a week. She took hold of me and I felt warmth and pleasure, but she was also surprised — because I did not have an erection, nor do I achieve one easily in such situations, not only because of the natural fear of the surroundings but also because of the “minor traumas” from the masseuse and girls from my childhood who had at times made me undress and touched me. That had not suited me then, and even pornography had at first had a distinctly negative effect on me through shame, and later a

positive one in terms of relaxation and the exploration of imagination. That remains unusual to me to this day. We agreed to go into the bushes. I lowered my trousers and she immediately “applied herself orally.” I was not fully ready then either; she showed off some lace underwear and adjusted it, wanting me to enter her (but only “not finish inside”). I declined, for hygienic, moral, and physical reasons (oddly enough), but continued by hand to bring things to a conclusion myself, and she complimented me on how I “looked.” I have had a few such situations in my life, and the pattern has always been similar. Throughout she looked me in the eyes and face, said I had nice teeth, and wanted to kiss me — though I was not enthusiastic about that. I think I only held her or kissed her on the top of the head. She was not offended. She could have been both my mother and my lover, and I felt strangely about that. She kept appearing outside, or they happened to have appointments at the same time as me, though from a completely different building. In any case I finished, dressed, we said goodbye with a certain brisk laughter, and I slipped back with a slight delay and rang the doorbell. I apologised for being late, but at least they had not seen how I had slipped away. A pleasant nurse asked how I was, or I volunteered of my own accord that I was particularly happy and had genuinely “liberated” and emptied “negative energy” in the fresh air and that was why I was late. With that irony aside, I genuinely felt psychologically and physically proud and full of whatever serotonin, dopamine, or otherwise that such an adventure and dash of freedom and sociability provide — the kind that always helps to break the monotony. The male and female wards were of course separate, and I only learned later that my new wife had been in the ward across the way beforehand and had also had amusing moments with her roommates. But such moments are rarely sexual, and I had not expected — let alone provoked — anything of the sort. I surprised myself, however, by how I had “made use” of my first break, given that I would ordinarily wander the city without any such “success” before — so I boasted about it to my roommates. Whilst the theology student looked at me somewhat sharply, the other laughed and compared me to that Don Juan, and afterwards even called me by that

name. My self-confidence returned, along with a hundred questions. It is extraordinary how life was unfolding like a novel in the very place where it was supposed to disappear.

“Well, it was only a half-betrayal, since it did not go all the way...” I said, justifying myself again with a laugh. “A half-betrayal, you say?” the theologian repeated several times, without adding anything after that rhetorical question. But it did not interest him as much as his plans for himself going forward. The other was also arranging things with his parents and arguing about whether they would take him back home. In any case, none of them were planning suicide or idleness once they got out. They were not planning to abandon treatment either, but nor were they planning endless check-ups. They were, in fact, less sceptical towards therapy than I was. My theology colleague was still caught up in questions about the nature of God and (in)justice and punishment in the world, whilst I had stopped thinking about *eschatology* and the end of the world, or my own end — as I had been on the eve of my arrival. The next day, when my wife came, the very woman I mentioned happened to be looking across from opposite. I was afraid she would approach, and we had to “of all times” be sitting on the bench directly opposite their building. I was eating some bean stew my wife had brought in a jar, and we talked quietly. But as I was passing on the other side, she came over and approached me as if she were constantly looking for me and waiting. Fortunately I was alone at that moment and I answered her: “Please — my wife is coming, do not cause me problems now...” She nodded that she would not, and walked away quietly, even though she had been boasting to two friends that I was “hers.” They smiled amongst themselves, and she was neither disappointed nor offended by my “hypocrisy.” She was also mature and, in her way, fond of me. And she respected my marriage. All of that surprised me pleasantly, though I was afraid things would grow complicated again. If my wife were to find out, the marriage would certainly be finished. This time honesty would not have helped me — and it did not help me in other things in court

later either. But I do not regret it, because honesty is the foundation on which I build every relationship.

And so I would walk the corridors later, watching people and thinking, holding a rosary in my hands and waiting to go home. “How are you?” my doctor would ask me every morning on rounds. “Well, fine. Same as any other day.” “How do you mean the same — does that mean badly?” “No, no — I mean equally well...” In truth I enjoyed the rounds, but I did not like the fact that three times a day they brought around trays of unknown medications. I was afraid that it would be precisely those that would rob me of the will and the mind to go on, and I did not feel as if anything was “hurting” me or holding me back beyond my own control. Besides, I was still young.

Fear, in fact, took me back to a “school-like” psychology, which is not entirely bad — time was valued and people got to know each other — though I did sweat a great deal as a young person and genuinely suffered bullying, theft of books and tickets, mockery, and more. Perhaps at times I was unknowingly the same towards those weaker than myself. It was precisely on “longer” freedom that I fell into depression more often, because there was no “something” that had to pass or had to be finished — no goal to reach, even under pressure, even if it meant success. The initial joy of breathing freely always diminished with time. Before, what had held me back was the knowledge that new examinations awaited me. Now what held me back was that they did not — whilst everyone’s expectations that I would be a proper adult man were enormous. That seemed to me both real and perverse. Like a punishment for so much personal progress since the days when I had been on the verge of collapse in everything. And so that episode ended. Although at times one could hear the sound of a guitar from the smoking room, playing no longer appealed to me as it once had at the seaside, or in imagination, or in my student days. When I told my “wiseman” colleague there that I had fallen into a sexual adventure — and that beside a cross, of all places — he only snapped back: “You see? Did I

not tell you? Look, listen, take care of yourself. You have eyes, ears, a brain. Do not fall into the same traps.” I did not take that as a criticism.

Finally — why was I actually arrested and ended up in hospital due to the danger of *suicide*? Because I had been constantly sending messages to people: to priests and to certain professors. And, among others, to that religious education teacher from secondary school — a prominent and very dear figure to me. I would often tell my mother, when she woke me and spoke to me tenderly — which I enjoyed even into adulthood — that I only waited for each Friday to arrive and spend the end of the week in his class. But I had also frequently “pestered” him afterwards with those stories and shifts in religious mood. I had deliberately said to everyone: *“Enough now — only when I actually do something will people take it seriously. This is my last message!”* After that he called the police or the emergency number, though he later “apologised” to me for it. I had not known but had suspected it was him. A girl from an association also called my father, and apparently someone from the church as well. More than half of the other recipients of my messages did not react at all — or I had simply become background noise to them. I was at least glad they did not attack me for it. My wife’s godmother still bore with me and even called from work, and I told her in the end to help my wife more than me. With her I often examined those themes of “sudden conversions,” leaving partners, faith, and so on — because she too had undergone such changes, which I liked, as we would be on the same wavelength. But those sudden changes in others irritated me. In any case, no one else — not even my wife — reacted concretely, and perhaps they cannot be blamed for it. Later my wife submitted those messages in court as evidence of my instability. Some of them I had also sent to my father-in-law. Whoever acted concretely — at least I knew they cared, even though I had not meant to provoke it, and I knew that my life was my own responsibility...

What had actually happened? Out of that dissatisfaction — primarily with myself — and out of a desire for my wife to truly be “free” and for the world and God to be “rid of me,” I began once again to cut myself, to

photograph it, and to send the images around. But it hurt, and I did not know what to do with that. Even the priest at the nearby church on Jarun told me I must not do it. I had tried, in the meantime, to live perfectly. Although I have no regrets about the fasting, the pilgrimages, the prayers, and the study of faith, those ideas of mine about “blood sacrifices” were “madness,” and I wanted to see whether I could go all the way. I even wanted to fast myself to death. Then I began drawing crosses on my arms. And when I saw that was not working, I told my wife that I needed to obtain a spray. Whether she ought to have supported me in precisely those moments is a question of marital law — but what matters is that she supported me as best she could at the time. She did not, of course, encourage me in any of it, and I will not say that her pressure on me to be more productive in life was the decisive factor. “I need to get hold of a numbing spray — the kind they used to use for teeth, or something like that herbicide from the vineyard that makes my skin go numb,” I would say. But I would then realise that even that was too mild for deeper wounds, and that I might spend hours dying or falling into delirium and soaking the flat. So I said I would go to the seaside house, to the garage, to get the circular saw with which I would cut precisely through my wrist so that the blood would drain away reliably, without losing the whole hand. As I deliberated between a knife and the machine, I went to the pharmacy and asked for something similar. “I’m afraid we don’t have that without a prescription,” they told me. “But I need it for something I would rather not discuss — it’s embarrassing,” I said. I thought they would understand, and one part of me was rooting for the pharmacist to see through it and feel sorry for me, whilst another part hoped she would not find out and would not ask. But I could not get it. I left disappointed, and as I was working out what else to do, I saw a police car parked in front of our building. Something felt off immediately, though I left open the possibility that it was there for the elderly neighbour. Everyone else was mostly at work. Even the neighbours from whom I would sometimes hear domestic arguments — and who, having had children, would shout or celebrate through the night (which is not easy for my misophonia) — I would leave gifts or greeting cards at their

door, by way of blessing, hoping to steer them towards peace and self-respect rather than “judging” them. The officers did not know that I had actually been at the pharmacy on the square and not at home, and that I could have walked away entirely. But it was precisely for that reason that it seemed to me my wife was at home, or that she had sent me a message saying she was. As I slowly made my way up to the building, I began to lose both fear and hope that this was about me — and when I saw my wife, I assumed she was simply alone. That is why the appearance of the police officers was, at one and the same time, both expected and a surprise. They even told her themselves that they had to hurry in case I had already done something in the room and was bleeding out. Had they not come, I would probably have continued talking to my wife about my final intentions and depressive thoughts, or waiting for some kind of salvation — and who knows what might have happened. But this did, in any case, change the course of my life. For better and for worse. I do not think, however, that it was the wrong experience.

That was the first time I was arrested — the second was after the threat at the seaside on the eve of the separation, and the third was a case of necessary self-defence at the seaside, which I write about later. All of this happened within the space of a few years, though I had never previously had any trouble with the law. I am glad, however, that my former wife could see that I had carried on with my life and recovered quickly, without further incidents. For a time she followed my WhatsApp statuses, which I deliberately adjusted after my new marriage, and she did not block me. But we were not permitted unofficial contact. I later blocked her and deleted the number myself, so that neither of us would live in fear or keep tabs on the other, and to avoid accidentally triggering calls or messages — besides, she can find out about me online if she wishes. I had long since deactivated my social media accounts because of their toxicity and the hostility I encountered there. For a period I even went without a mobile phone entirely. And when my new wife and I visited that cousin’s family in good faith, I could have been arrested for recidivism. I was still puzzled as to why

we had not been informed when his mother boasted that they had welcomed a grandchild and had held a small wedding. She spoke about illnesses in the family as well, and the moment she saw me she recoiled with fear. It took me several hours to even think of verifying such a scenario online, and to find that my former wife now signs economic articles under his surname. In the end I am genuinely glad for her — and for myself — but what struck me more was that she does not know what state my father is in, or that my grandmother and grandfather have since died. And I do not know how our cat is. Our dog died long ago, in my arms, as I “apologised to him for our sins” — and I am glad she indirectly found out that I now have a new dog. She had always wanted us to have a dog in the flat. And now my new wife and I do. I was also struck by learning that her brother had died. And so the story continues, and touches on that as well.

But what is most cinematic of all is that my new wife shares so many traits with my former one. She too has a dog and a cat and loves nature and songs — including my songs and works — and her father is also called Stjepan. She also has a younger brother and an older sister, and a similarly charged set of family relationships, and nieces. Make of that what you will. But unlike the previous situation, we have not returned to hospital, and my new wife has “forbidden” me from talking about death and illness. We do not live at her place, fortunately — in a house that will not remain hers in any case — and I have not found myself again in “his wife’s territory,” stumbling into conflicts and being a burden. The tensions were already there from my brief visits, and in the meantime her mother died and the estate was redistributed in the usual opaque ways. In general, what I always notice is the burden borne by younger daughters, who are forever “daughters of the second rank,” whilst a brother finds himself caught between two fires. But there were good relationships and mutual help and shared confidences there too, so that the bond between siblings is something I do not know directly. Being tolerant by nature and mild in temperament, she accepted that I too have a past, flaws, freedoms, and certain habits — and I accepted her past and her (sexual) habits. My wives

have often endured the instabilities of my family. But that freedom from fixed ideas, goals, and a projected future makes us both free and bound together now. It makes us partners and friends who understand one another, and who have at the same time fallen endlessly in love — we manage well enough sexually and are content, without being “overopen.” We are more mature, and we know that neither of us will want nor seek many new chances. After weeping and praying to God through the failure of many a dating advertisement, I was given the satisfaction of closing the old marriage behind me, setting aside (though not discarding) the old ring, and moving forward — quickly yet gradually. And this new marriage, even if only civil for now, we carry in our hearts and before God — humbly but firmly. We have lived all this time with my grandmother, who both irritated and delighted us. She died after my grandfather, and so it never came to the point where “wives flee the house because of her again.” We now have the flat to ourselves, though that was never an opportunistic aim. I have always advocated patience, because time tends to favour the young. We are now adjusting to a solitude and independence that comes ever later in Croatia regardless, whether one is employed or has children. We have a duty to help the elderly as they helped us, despite the occasional friction, and my parents live in the flat above. We have our health, our sense of purpose, our achievements, and our plans — even if we feel a little worn, and for the first time “of flesh and blood.” Her past too — the alleged *schizophrenia, prostitution, violence, an abortion, failed relationships, jobs, thefts, and a hospitalisation*, as well as *the war and murky social circles* — all of that remains behind her, and behind us, as a single shared experience. But there was also work, pleasure, freedom, travel, and her care for one “ungrateful” wealthy invalid, house cleaning, taxi driving, restaurant and secretarial work, helping her mother, and so on. We are not indifferent to the past, nor are we obsessed with it or with ideal beginnings. We are not new and undamaged, yet neither are we disappointed that things did not go according to convention. We have simply, at last, accepted life — and we are genuinely glad of everything, even as we are sometimes tired and would wish for a more perfect world, and even as we sometimes feel afraid.

My new wife is creative, hardworking, writes poetry, decorates homes, helps me, and says kind words every day — and we resolve every problem as it comes. Perhaps the middle years are truly the best years for a relationship. We are versatile and open, yet faithful at the same time. We hope that the question of the family inheritance at the seaside, and of my father's incurable illness and deep old age, and of her father's advanced age, will be things that only prepare us further for full independence. And there is my mother, who is still going — working part-time in retirement, in good health, though feeling, like the rest of us, for the first time without full protection. So I must take on the role of "reserve father," as my father used to joke with me in my younger years. It was precisely as I was leaving secondary school, after the final lesson on human rights, that I said: "You see in me an example of someone who can achieve everything — and then lose it all." Some of the girls were taken aback, and genuinely sad to see me go. I also saw that even the BEST people can **betray** when health or interest fail.

2. CASE — "UNSTABLE AND TRAUMATIC SUICIDE", or attempts and threats — my two wives

My first wife frequently had outbursts of "suicidal threats." I even submitted these to the court, though without success. For every recurring bout of family tension, every "village gossip," or every wave of guilt about having left her former fiancé, she would have a passive-aggressive outburst of rage — announcing herself every morning as "nervous." Although I wanted peace, and would often study late into the night and simply want to begin the day with an easy conversation, I would be met with "problems" from her side. She had a different rhythm and was a morning person who travelled frequently, but she was a catalyst for both her own difficulties and those of the wider family. I, for my part, was oversensitive — particularly in the evenings when I was tired, or in the mornings when I was rested. I would therefore often lose patience, tear up one of her photographs, or react angrily — which even led my parents to briefly throw me out of the

flat and send me to my grandparents, ostensibly to protect her. They threatened to change the locks if I behaved that way. I resented all of this, because I did not want it — and it only intensified the frustration, especially when it happened not in person but over the phone. I knew, though, that I was always the one who *reacted* — not the one who initiated the negative energy. That said, I reject the claim that she was directly responsible for my depression, suicidality, psychotic episodes, or outbursts and tics. She did, however, frequently use *heavy words* — “*I’ll kill myself, I’d rather die, I’m going to kill myself*” — and she even wrote in an email that *she would most like to plunge a knife into her (possibly pregnant) abdomen, that she did not want to live*, and so on. Although I was also the image of “consolation” and *hyper-romanticism* for her — the archetype of the character from such dramatic songs or films — I was often not a sufficient anchor for her own instabilities. And she always presented the situation as though it were exactly the reverse. Yet the mutual “healing” through love and the support we gave each other were also very much present throughout those ten years. The truth is that we frequently tried to treat ourselves through the other person. That was not always done in any aggressive way — far from it — but perhaps in a *toxic* one. That is a word I dislike, and it describes relationships that perhaps more closely resemble the dynamic between my grandparents (who survived precisely as such) or worse sadomasochistic arrangements — but in any case, that palpable individual instability, spilling over into the relationship, was real. A relationship is not, and need not be in my view, a union of two “supermen” — and sometimes two people with a heavy past, like my new wife and myself, can function almost perfectly. I would not even use the word “tolerant” to describe it, because that would imply we are enduring something or holding back. What we have does not feel like tolerance — it is almost invisible to us. I do not know what things are like in my former wife’s new marriage, but I hope that the “curse” of upheaval and change will be broken there too. Many analysts see only the consequences of things — the causes remain conjecture, apparently, even for the professionals. *Workaholism*, for instance, was also an escape for my first wife. That is sometimes both logical and illogical to mention. It is a

legitimate escape, but it kept her nervously exhausted and strained, and she endured it — herself, me, and both families. She made a free decision, though under pressure, in both of her relationships. In court, only partial truths are ever presented. I believed that my complete honesty and self-criticism would open the judges' eyes — but judges want a concrete diagnosis. It was precisely that combination of great sacrifice, love, joy, grief, romance, sentimentality, values, taste, circumstances, difficulties, and flawed natures that created the “melting pot” in which we found ourselves, and which eventually boiled over like a pressure cooker. Things now are similar — yet different, and more refined than before. I did not believe I would find so many similarities with someone in both cases. Yet with my first wife, mutual respect still exists, I believe, in our minds — even if it does not manifest itself in the kind of post-marital “friendship” that people advocate, because for that to work certain very rational conditions must be met, conditions which in my view are often themselves meaningless (if there are no children, for instance). Friendship can grow into love — but not the reverse. Even between a man and a woman there can be friendship, but again only in exceptional circumstances and in the absence of other concealed attractions. I had something of that kind for a period towards the end of primary school, and we connected as “outsiders.” Genuine mutual “higher” attempts were rare. Reaching any kind of independence requires a great deal of composure, time, and self-sufficiency, or a new sense of meaning. Life proves the truth of the right to free love within oneself rather than outside oneself — but that takes a great deal of time and experience. I believe that both of my wives would have respected one another, and that even “from a distance” they do.

Briefly, regarding my *second wife* and our relationship — I have already made a film about it and given my own account — I can and must describe, without naming those involved, the kinds of people and events at issue here. She is older than me, a member of Generation X, who grew up in Zagreb, Bosnia, and Switzerland, living very quietly and “normally” as a very good and excellent pupil. She did not involve herself in vices or drugs, but

she had the same kinds of problems and “addictions” as most of us at the end of the last century — video games, television, socialising, a little alcohol, and minimal gambling. Life, however, and her own decisions, her search for herself, for happiness, for work, and for love, took her in many directions. After secondary school she did not go on to university — as later became the “essential norm” — but worked many jobs, including taxi driving, caregiving as I mentioned, animal sitting, secretarial work, answering sex lines as others did at the time, domestic work, and various other jobs — some commendable, some now considered distasteful — that a young woman might take on. She appeared on television reality programmes for a short period before becoming disillusioned. She also worked as an extra in films, sometimes topless. But she drifted, briefly, into the world of *massage*, “*prostitution*,” *detention*, and *kleptomania* (with various justifications), where she even lived “comfortably” for a time, though she also acquired serious health problems and traumas — and that was even before all of this. During the **Homeland War** of 1991, when she was engaged in Zadar at barely eighteen or nineteen years of age, she was *called up* and summoned to war together with her boyfriend, by some girl, and she experienced those flights from the city and the sounds of shelling before soon relocating and ending the relationship. He remained in the war. Because she is equally *hypersensitive* and *utopian* in everything she does, all of this affected her so profoundly that she ended up in a *coma* and did not regain consciousness for a week. The doctors wanted to resuscitate her heart, but her sister would not allow it — and she managed to wake up on her own. At home she began screaming and having uncontrollable episodes, and she went through extremely difficult things with her own mother, which I write about later. She wore a “straitjacket” for a short period and received injections, and owing to various naïve statements and remarks she made — about how she would inject bad people to make them disappear, or rather leave that to the army — she was diagnosed with *schizophrenia*. She spent time in *hospitalisation* and later received medication in syrup form, but through years of work with a good and well-regarded doctor at Jankomir she achieved *remission* and remarkable

results. Indeed, since marrying me, four years have passed without any excesses — only mutual trust and understanding of each other's needs and failings — and because of that devoted heart, and the knowledge that I will never betray her, she is relaxed and happy "like a child." I have noticed no unrealistic ideas or episodes, except that we sometimes cry together. She is also reasonable, hardworking, compliant, delights in small things, and is modest. Since we frequent a similar waiting room — having both been there — our love has been called "*Love at First Diagnosis*." Despite her traumas she was also remarkably resilient, having cared for one-hundred-percent psychotic invalids and endured environments more unstable or criminal than herself. She was initially afraid I too might be nervous, aggressive, and distrustful — and I perhaps thought the same of her — but after I wept and promised her she could trust me if I could trust her, I asked her not to leave. And she did not leave, nor has she abandoned me. Although she feared I might be someone difficult and unpredictable, in the end she herself initiated our life together and our marriage, and every morning she begins the day with the kindest words. In body and spirit I feel as though I am with someone younger than me and similar to me, not someone older. She is not jealous if I were to "physically stray" with someone else once a year, but it is precisely through those and the few other brief experiences with girls or "short-term lovers" that I have seen — in body, spirit, and intellect — that girls of twenty-five are often more worn and "neglected" than she is in her fifties, or have worse genes and nerves. She has remained inwardly preserved. She has great goodness and endurance, yet is also more sensitive to trauma. Indeed, she endured blackmail at work from a "stocky bald employer" who genuinely exploited her, took her on business trips, and threatened her family if she tried to leave. He forced her into sexual intercourse in a car, and when she refused he struck her over the head with a piece of wood — arrogant or affronted, whichever way one chooses to see it — and effectively *raped* her, as a result of which she became unwantedly and pre-maritally *pregnant*. After that she underwent an *abortion*, at her own mother's urging — I do not wish to draw explicit conclusions about the causality of such decisions,

though one may perhaps draw implicit ones as to whether such easier decisions are correct in view of the unhappy futures that followed for all those involved. Yet she, who repented of it, and who has had no children since, has not falsely justified herself and does not carry that particular “psychic and psychological burden.” At times she is even “overly self-critical.” And there lies the problem: those who create *darkness* often have less conscience than those who experience it or accept a share of it in themselves. Those scars — regardless of faith or conviction — are not negligible, yet neither are they decisive for the rest of one’s life. I too was a victim of *theft, bullying, and sexual acts* — even at the hands of older girls and women — as well as of traumas from cassettes I found in my own home, and yet I believe I would have developed my sense of right and wrong independently of those experiences, and would have gone both astray and upstream regardless. Even if we accept that we are determined by genes, environment, fallen nature, habits, or anything else, our free will and at least our love of certain values — or perhaps the good fortune of having a conscience — is what renders our lives and decisions through our actions *responsible*, as though each of us were precisely those “first people.” Though often, when I find myself in a hopeless position, I logically blame others, the world, and pre-existing conditions rather than myself. Even so, I also see that the young are often better than we are, and I frequently see light in darkness and darkness in light — and despite that weight, I believe that my awareness, forgiveness, and creativity are precisely what advance with such speed in these years, and after “traumas” or mistakes.

What matters for this chapter — since I often digress — is that my second wife also once attempted to *kill herself by cutting*. But it hurt, and like most people she did not know how to go about it, so she gave up. She went into the woods and made small cuts with a razor blade on minor veins, and as a result her medication was increased and her hospital treatment extended. I know a peer of mine who has remained in hospital treatment practically for life, without ever having made a serious attempt

at suicide. Although we often think of girls as selective, she says she had imagined someone precisely “like me” and that she had already recoiled in advance at the thought that her future partner might be taken and married (which I was at the time), or have children, and that she might never meet him. I too have often thought about the girls who exist somewhere out there, unknown to me yet. Here *mysticism* and *intuition* converge, though perhaps also mere *talk of fate*. I do not believe there is only “one kindred soul” or that it is fated that one should end a relationship in order to meet another — yet we are both aware that an extremely small percentage of people are similar to us, would accept our way of life, and would be as content. Though not so small a number in relative terms, it is certainly small in absolute ones — roughly one in a hundred is my own life experiment of encounters, attempts, and misses, with no end in sight. Yet despite the initial courage, searching, or effort, when you do meet the right person, the mutual fears, complexes, and need to prove oneself become irrelevant — because everything flows naturally, mutually, well, and easily. That is what is remarkable. Before, there was always “fear of the wrong move or the wrong message.” Although we moved quickly into every form of relationship, we have remained in them for a long time, which is proof enough — for ourselves and for others — and we often feel genuine empathy towards former partners and acquaintances, without any lingering attachment. In my view, that cannot be a higher degree of things — but reaching it requires patience and “luck.” Something so free and easy — love as mutual partnership and support first, and only then pleasures and shared projects — turns out to be costly and hard to attain simply because our whole lives we beat our heads against a wall. Partners come first; children and everyone else come after.

On account of youthful attachments we still wonder to this day whether human beings are truly monogamous — but whereas we once enjoyed that process, after puberty a pressure of expectations set in, which is why it becomes ever harder to find a kindred spirit. Today we have maturity but lose that happy uncertainty (which is distinct from the

“carefreeness” people so often attribute to youth). I believe it was possible, even from sexual maturity, to find a partner and have an independent love — one that is not obsessive, that does not lose its attraction over time, that does not send one looking elsewhere, and that allows one to fulfil other obligations. But that is hard to imagine achieving perfectly in this body and in this society. On the other hand, nothing in this world succeeds on the first attempt — and yet, despite all that strengthening, all those traumas and that patience, is it not extraordinary that most of one’s wishes do come true in a life, and that most evils either do not happen or pass quickly and briefly? Evil seems threatening everywhere, and yet nowhere to be found. Our subjective projections are often the source of our disappointments. Some things are better than we expected, others worse. That is why faith is difficult to sustain — and yet we need to “work on great changes in ourselves and the world” least of all. “Patience is salvation” — easy to say now, but the answers are simple and self-evident.

3. CASE — “FRUSTRATED SUICIDES” OR ATTEMPTS AND THREATS — the mothers of my wives

My first *mother-in-law*, who testified against me about my “immaturity,” also had a constantly strained marriage and ongoing irritations. In those moments there would often be outbursts — she would throw a cloth down and leave, burst into tears, and so on. My then girlfriend and later wife told me she had threatened to *drink a full mug of salt* so that her kidneys would fail.

My second *mother-in-law* — my second wife’s mother — had diabetes but led a cheerful and good-quality life whilst working as a hairdresser and a hospital worker. She raised three children and has a husband who has lived to a great age — hardworking and not aggressive. But she too suffered because of the war in her native Bosnia, and because of the relocation that can so often be a difficult trigger, for women and men alike. One cannot live in two places at once. At times a difficult upbringing is

also a wearing down of one's nerves, and afterwards one "makes mountains out of molehills." Her children were, on the whole, successful and supportive — they have property of their own, children of their own, and my wife was the last to marry, though "happily." In the last twenty years, however, she began to withdraw into herself and into *a form of depression*. She would not leave the house for days, would *lock herself in* and not answer the phone, and then would suddenly get in touch and invite everyone to lunch as though nothing had happened — or would become angry if others did not call her. At those times she could also behave cheerfully and reasonably. Afterwards, however, she would "rummage through her thoughts" and look only for negative connotations in memories, misunderstood jokes, or other things — often scheming by gossiping about one person to another, or fabricating or exaggerating misunderstandings and conflicts. Towards the end, others began doing all the household tasks for her and bringing food from the shop, and since she stopped working in the garden (supposedly so as not to overexert herself, as she had no self-restraint) she declined — just as my grandmother did once she stopped going for walks, going to the shop, and going out. Her mental state began to narrow, and this is the same pattern as with the others I describe here — and with myself — a person who is young and in the years when people genuinely did not know what depression was, though they had other failings. Yet it was because of her own instabilities or disorders — rather than the diabetes — that she brought herself to the point of *attempting suicide in full earnest*. That trauma she later carried with her, and it further shook her daughter and the family. *She cut her arm and the vein all the way up to the shoulder with a knife*. There was blood everywhere, a pool of it, and when my wife — who was not yet my wife at the time — began screaming, her father came and tried to calm things down whilst calling the emergency services. After the ambulance, the police also arrived, and their first question was: "Who did this to her?" My wife was shaken to find herself having to justify the situation, but answered: "No one. She did it herself. Who would have done it to her? Please help her!" Once they had ruled out a criminal act, the emergency services admitted

her — as they had done a month before her actual death. In the meantime the scars had healed, and a full decade had passed since that incident without any active attempts — though through *passive dying and negative thinking*. In the final year, when I came to the house — and I visited my wife's former flat upstairs only rarely — she would often become agitated and shout at us, or tremble out of fear or because her comfort had been disturbed. At other times she would not open the door, or would scream to herself alone. None of us had offended her — we had not even had time to quarrel — but a surrounding environment saturated with stresses often ends up siding with the mother against others, as a way of finding a common enemy or releasing accumulated internal tension.

At the seaside there was a similarly erratic and frequently intoxicated woman who caused trouble in the village over disputes about rights of way, whilst her son would threaten my father on account of her condition, which we supposedly “made worse.” Later, when no one concerned themselves with her, she exhausted herself and those immediately around her through her instability, her drinking, and her other behaviour. At that point the “external problem” shifted back onto the real one — the relationship within the family, and between a mother and her son, and vice versa. That same son once broke her head open and she was left in bandages. She later died relatively young as well, and the house was sold. The psychological pattern, then, is similar, and it is easy to recognise what is at work.

I had no further contact with my new mother-in-law — particularly after she once attacked us in the courtyard with a pitchfork, entirely without provocation. After I fled, she turned on her husband and began smashing a window, so that he had to call the police himself, though she herself did not know what to do with an old and sick woman. But all of that came back to be held against her later. And then, just a few days before her death, whilst we were at the beach, she went out to a café with her husband in good spirits. She wanted to hear from her “son-in-law” and to apologise. I did not know what she wanted and was not in that “film” in my

head, and I did not pick up. I regret that now. A few days later I was roused from a half-sleep in the early morning by my wife's weeping and shouting. As during the earthquake, I could not at first make out what was triggering it, still half-delirious. I tried to gather myself and understand what was happening. "*Bartul — my mother has died...*" she wept and sobbed and held me close. I held her and comforted her instinctively. Her heart had been failing in those final days; they had opened her chest but there was no saving her. She had been hospitalised before that, though I do not know whether in a psychiatric or a general hospital.

4. "PASSIVE, INDIRECT, DISSOCIATIVE" AND INDUCED SUICIDE — the case of my grandmother

I shall write a great deal more about the *grandmother* (on father's side) I lived with — the one who practically cared for me and raised me from an early age — later on, in a philosophical and psychological context also. Her case was what prompted me to write this book, and I experienced her end very painfully; I was the only one who cared for her in those final years, together with my new wife. She had been a teacher of the Croatian language and an outstanding educator of primary school children in Dubrava. She was loved and respected, and was also attractive and distinguished. In retirement she devoted herself to me, socialised with her friends on Mondays, and in the summer helped with the seaside apartment, took pleasure in the guests, swam, and went for walks. She did, however, have what might be described as *autism in a broader sense*. She sometimes failed to grasp basic things, and in general would irritate people with her responses or questions, leading to arguments and certain aggression within the family. My grandfather said of her that "she cannot picture a circle in her mind." Yet whilst he concerned himself with intellectual frameworks, she was the one who ran the household, the family, and himself. She would forget bad relations — but also the advice we gave her. That was a double-edged sword, and we felt guilty for arguing with her at all. From the time of

her retirement and the beginning of the war, the problems were more physical than psychological in nature: she was spending ever more time indoors. She was so comfortable in that arrangement while my grandfather was still alive that it seemed as though she had always been a pensioner. She would watch television, read the newspapers, and do crossword puzzles. Alongside certain other disagreements and difficult relations with her husband and son, the greatest problem was herself.

The beginning of her end came as she gradually “cut back on tasks” and shortened the habits and activities she had previously carried out. Since we had taken over the shopping, the cooking, the washing-up, and the paying of bills, she had lost, beyond financial assistance (with which she was also becoming confused), every “sense of purpose” and had begun sinking into dreams and the past. She had reached a great age but still had more in her. And what mattered most was that she had come to seem neglected — perhaps even taken advantage of — when in truth she simply refused help and any form of activity, including personal hygiene. Every explanation that she would in this way decline slowly, and drag us down with her and open questions of responsibility, she received as some kind of attack. She always had excuses, and she was still quite capable of walking. The problem was always “the chiropody and the crooked toe,” “the trainers, the haircut, and the clothes” — and when we had prepared all of it she would not want to go out, or would change the subject. She would always ask the same meaningless questions, and I sometimes could not believe she had once been a teacher and an intelligent woman. I later discovered that my grandfather had helped her considerably with the formal aspects of her education, and that she had failed biology. In the end I let her sleep and eat minimally, knowing that *prolonged sleep and the cessation of activity leads slowly and passively towards death — and more precisely, towards a form of self-destruction*. It made no difference to her, but we too bore some responsibility; and I thought she would continue to be an example to us as an older person, even though the time had come for me to “repay” her care from my younger years. She began to walk with a stoop, lost her sense of

time, developed a growth on her back from lying down, and grew lethargic to the point where there was no going back. She did not take to her bed for long and we did not feed her there, but she effectively stopped eating altogether. In her final days I gave her certain supplements and vitamins, which only stimulated her digestion, and beyond that there was nothing more to be done. Our last shared lunch was on New Year's Day, when she kept asking whether the Vienna New Year's Concert was being held in Zagreb. It was not so much dementia as the neglect of her own mind, combined with a congenital difficulty in one form of intelligence, mixed with a certain pride and a sense of life unfulfilled — in the years when her own generation was no longer near. Yet she also refused social engagements and was not entirely alone: she would smoke with my wife and talk pleasantly over morning coffee, though she repeated the same stories, as my grandfather had done before his death. They had a kind of "love-hate" symbiosis, and would often lay their difficulties on their son. On the other hand, they had maintained a daily routine their whole lives, which had also protected their health — though my grandmother was also a worrier and a fusspot. She often blamed only others for her condition, much like a relative at the seaside who claimed that property had corrupted people — when in fact it was she herself who had spent her entire old age thinking about property. She too died suddenly of cancer recently.

One morning she went to the lavatory and sat there for a long time. I was immediately suspicious, but I expected she would send me away if I approached the half-open door. She was silent throughout. I could tell that something was different from before. I went to her and asked how she was. She sat holding a piece of toilet paper, staring at a single point, murmuring something — entirely lost, with glassy eyes. I knew "what time it was." I tried to "wake" her and ask what was happening, but she had finished and was shutting down. It was no longer possible, and she began to "go out like a light." My wife and I tried to lift her and get her to the bed, but despite showing a little will, she had so collapsed that the moment we raised her her legs would give way and she would fall — we held her arms whilst her

head and torso hung “like a figure on a cross.” We were afraid of dislocating something, so we lowered her to the floor. She lay there soiled on the bathroom rug and wanted to sleep. She said to leave her where she was. The only thing she still managed to answer was that she loved me too.

We called the emergency services, who were again baffled — unable to grasp that we would not have called them if we had not had to, and that otherwise we would have managed on our own. When she once fell and cut her face we had taken her to hospital ourselves. There too she had been unaware of her surroundings, talking constantly and wandering about on her own. Yet she was not entirely “unreasonable.” She even appeared ungrateful at times, and I was afraid it might look as though someone had struck her. The emergency services arrived relatively quickly this time and together with me lifted her onto the bed, where she rallied a little. She was still saying: “No, don’t lift me onto the bed.” They measured her blood pressure and pulse — both normal. That too is not uncommon. She was talking about how she was “obviously dying,” and they were telling her she was not going to die and that we needed to look after her better. I turned away and muttered under my breath. I told them we had been with her for ten years whilst they had been here five minutes and were lecturing me. “Well, you don’t have to care for her yourselves — she could go into a care home,” said the young woman from Generation Z. “Good Lord,” I replied, “the misfortune of being a lawyer who has visited care homes and knows them all too well.” It is enough to “Google” some of the owners. My grandmother had applied for a place in a state care home twenty years earlier, and they sent her the invitation just after her death. At least the timing was apt. Other homes are full and insufficient even for a larger pension, and some I later found had been charged with fraud and corruption — so I withdrew, even though I had paid a deposit, simply to avoid further trouble. She was best at home, but she neither fully appreciated that nor cooperated. She had not even seen her own son since he fell ill, nor did that concern her greatly, nor did her other granddaughter.

Yet I held on to the end, and we gave her a little more food and let her sleep.

That evening she called my wife and said she needed to use the lavatory again. We told her she had a nappy now and could use it, and that we would sort things out when we got back. We went into the city and returned around nine in the evening. Beyond the presentiment, there was also the smell of *excrement* in the air. I knew there was a mess, but not how bad. I assumed it would simply need cleaning. We entered the room. She was sleeping on her side and I could barely make out something wet. When I turned on the light I saw the entire bed — not just the trousers and the nappy. Her back and body were drenched in **dark, near-black blood** mixed with diarrhoea and the supplement we had given her on prescription for nutrition. After the initial shock I called the emergency services again to ask. It is known that the supplement can cause loose stools, but from the colour I could see it was not the same colour, and that something else had mixed into it. Stomach acid had combined with advanced gastritis — the tablets for which she had also stopped taking — together with blood from the upper gastrointestinal tract and with the excrement. Even earlier, as I was giving her the supplement, she had said she could not manage any more and had spat out a little dark liquid from her mouth. I had not known then that she was bleeding, because it did not hurt her. She had always thought she would die of heart failure, for which she took tablets regularly, though everything seemed complicated to her. I could no longer look at it, and my wife met the emergency services, who after their customary bewilderment took her once again to Rebro hospital. **Exactly three years had passed since she had begun progressively declining.** I later saw that this was both the realistic span and my own real intuition. I waited the whole evening on that feast of the Three Kings, in early January 2026, and set off from home around two in the morning to visit her and see whether she was still alive. That autumn I had been going to the Clinical Hospital Centre almost every day on account of myself and my father, so this had become familiar. I sat in

the waiting room and announced myself, and saw that they had been trying to reach me.

“Mr Marušić, we were just calling you — we wanted to say that the news is not quite what we would have hoped; certain complications have arisen suddenly... We did not want to resuscitate her at her age.” As I walked towards the room they drew the curtain and expressed their condolences, and I approached my grandmother, now dead and stiffened. She had been in some unconscious, rigid, and agonised state, and they said she had not known where she was, asking throughout for the bright light to be turned off. She looked like a doll. As a small child I had once touched a corpse in a coffin to see whether it was a person or a wax figure. I kissed her and said goodbye, then quickly covered her with a blanket so as not to look at that sight — not so much out of grief as out of an aesthetic revulsion and a kind of moral horror at the final image of someone who had once been such a fine and beautiful woman. At least it was over. She had been very egocentric in life, though not egotistical, and she did leave me something afterwards. The body had so exhausted itself, consumed every reserve of strength, muscle, and energy, that it had simply — all at once, like skin and bone — given out; until then it had been preserving itself through sleep and rest. She had, after all, maintained the habit and the imperative of going to the lavatory on her own — but she would skip meals and sleep for almost two days at a stretch, and that had been her end. At least she was wearing the orange pyjamas she had wanted. I turned to face the window. Afterwards, because of the bureaucracy and the grief, I neither collected her nor organised the funeral immediately, nor did I take her belongings and rings, because I could not bear the process surrounding the *post-mortem, the transfer, the paperwork, and the phone calls*. The cold and “necessary” **procedure** after death simply broke me further. The centre wanted nothing to do with it, the hospital and the city were silent, and even the police called with routine enquiries. The funeral companies irritated me further with their demands regarding a distant and unmarked grave, and in the end my wife and mother organised the transport and a quiet, private

burial — with considerable delay. She went to join her husband at the seaside. Perhaps that was better than a municipal funeral, even if it would have placed her closer to us. Many people visit the cemetery on All Saints' Day as a bureaucratic obligation, and I do not mourn the lack of that either. In Zagreb I simply arranged a memorial Mass and decided to “keep her well in memory and *in life*” in another way. I wept bitterly the following day, and after that carried on. I was glad I could still weep — it had seemed to me that I had lost that ability, and I had come to see it as a sign of guilt or a lack of conscience. When I speak and use the term **(self-)inducing suicide**, this would not be the only example — there are also many neighbours from the village who drank poor-quality wines and died suddenly and inexplicably, or developed colon cancer, even though my father had long warned them about the difference between methyl, ethyl, natural, and artificially produced alcohol without grapes. Interestingly, before gramma died, she constantly mentioned and dreamed about Arko and his castle in Severin, and he himself committed suicide after the WWII. It's as if one spirit draws another, even beyond genetics but a connection! For „reckless“ or induced suicide, I would even bring up the example of my grandpa's best friend and colleague, who died due to his nonchalance while crossing the motorway. We can include this example also in other chapters as well.

5. CASE — the grandfather of my half-sister: “ REPRESSED SUICIDE”

The grandfather of my half-sister had been a former *alcoholic* and a man of faith. He says he experienced an illumination at the Stone Gate shrine in Zagreb and had not drunk for years. He cared for his wife, who had been left *immobile for twenty years* following a botched operation. She was in remarkably good spirits despite this, and he came to see it as his cross and his reason for being and working. With his daughter — my father's “mistress” and the mother of my half-sister — he had difficulties, as she, burdened by various traumas, had become *neurotic*. Her father had once

held a *knife to her chest* and told her to get out. And in their Bibles and books at home I saw quotations and notes about their arguments, in which she would repeatedly justify herself with: “*This time I really am not at fault...*” Despite the particular circumstances of her extramarital relationship with my father, I did not reject my half-sister, nor she me, nor her mother. But we too came together like two opposing poles and eventually drifted apart. Those adult relationships were a burden to me as well — the constant lecturing whilst their own example thoroughly spoiled our childhood. Yet I am old enough to have understood all of that and to have withdrawn without any serious further incident. Her daughter, though she cannot be impartial since she lives with her mother, is intelligent and perceptive enough to follow all of this without comment. In court it emerged that there had also been domestic violence on that side, and that my half-sister had developed PTSD following the earthquake, various arguments, and my father’s illness. Her mother lost her job in the police — she was a talented criminologist — only to find employment much later, having had several “episodes of misconduct against corruption” that led to her being restrained and given an injection in hospital. She was a typical example of extensive rather than intensive episodes. Yet her grandfather preferred to “unwind” by tending a small vineyard in the Zagorje region and was not aggressive. He had devoted himself to faith, watched sport, and was warm towards me — he even comforted me after one incident in which his daughter had *slapped me*.

But it happened that his immobile wife *died*. She had never been depressed. She had loved us all despite barely being able to speak, and she died in a saintly and martyred way in the summer heat in some care home. Because of her immobility her skin had become inflamed and adhered to the bed. She was reportedly “struck” and “yanked” abruptly by the staff, and she died in relative pain and over a relatively long period — even a few weeks. Instead of finding relief after years of caregiving, her husband got drunk once more, suddenly and severely. He first wanted to live with his daughter, and in the end went to the same care home where my

grandfather had also spent his final days. That same home — pleasant and modestly priced as it was — later closed because of tax reforms and various financial difficulties. But it was a beautiful place, set in the Zagorje countryside, and we visited him often and brought him cigarettes. Despite the good staff and an even better view, he looked deeply depressed and far worse than before. Though still relatively young and in sound health, he would simply sit and smoke. My grandfather had been particular about the location; this man did not care about anything. When we mentioned how beautiful the landscape was, and the sunsets and sunrises, he simply snapped back: “To hell with nature and sunsets.” That, in truth, was the beginning of the end — though none of us took it seriously enough. He said all that mattered was one’s health, but also that nothing about that place appealed to him, though he had friends and good food. Years passed — again, roughly three. While I was training on the beach in my home town of Omiš and preparing for what I intended as a symbolic beginning to karate — dedicating it to my father, with whom I had not trained in karate as a boy though I had wished to — my father called me on the phone. By then he too was beginning to be affected by the genetically rare *SCA1 ataxia* and by heart failure, though we did not yet know it, despite his having been an athlete. I was entirely in my own world, looking down our street where I had taken my first steps as a child, whilst on the beach below the outdoor summer cinema was showing *The Lion King*. I was actually in good spirits — I had been running from the village all the way to town, and was in a romantically inspired state of recovery from the divorce, working through it all. “Right, I’m not interested in that now. Do you know what happened?” my father said, ominously. “He... has died.” I did not switch into that register at all, but I was surprised. I did not want anything to spoil the evening.

Only a few years later did he tell me again: “Do you know that there is no such thing as a natural death, and that dying is not easy? Do you know how he died?” “No...” “*He killed himself...* He jumped from the first-floor balcony because he could no longer bear it...”

6. CASE — LATENT AND OTHER SUICIDES: the husband of my grandmother's sister

The *husband of my grandmother's sister* was a wonderful man. He always played *Lego* with me at Christmas. He was an excellent worker and tile-layer, a man from Primoršcan, and unsurprisingly non-aggressive — in fact, almost entirely disengaged from everything. My grandmother's sister, though she had lived through the war and barely escaped the fate of those at *Bleiburg*, remained working as a teacher, and the two of them lived in a small Primorje coastal town in a state attic flat attached to the primary school where they had the right of residence. Whenever I visited, she would show me toys and was very fond of me. He also did some work for us. He liked to drink, however. He was an alcoholic, and because of that — and because of the customs of the coastal way of life — he had no property of his own. Everything belonged to his sister, who was known as a *libertine*, though I do not know the details. While he was working for us at the seaside my grandfather asked him, as a favour, to reduce from three litres to at least a litre and a half whilst on the job. Since we had our own homemade wine it was no trouble to provide it, and he did not even lose his concentration — but my grandfather considered it on principle too much and too risky. Though his wife said he had given up drinking, he was in fact quietly and constantly drinking in the kitchen at home. He had never been depressed, was not directly marked by the war, and lived “carefreely” without stress. He was entirely “anaesthetised” — not even as an escape, but simply as a way of life (*genetics, retirement + opiates*). When my father last visited them he said that “*he smelt from both ends... it was strange how his wife put up with it.*” My mother said it did not matter and that he was exaggerating. My dear great-aunt never forgot my birthday. She always remembered. A few weeks after my fifteenth birthday she died. She had come back from the shop, put down her bags, and said: “Oh, how tired I am — I must sit down for a moment.” She lay back and simply — fell asleep. Genetically she died of a heart attack, as did my great-grandfather, who collapsed on the road. The funeral passed, and her husband held himself

together, composing himself with dignity. Within the space of a year, however, he had drunk himself into *acute alcoholic poisoning and delirium, and died alone.*

7. CASE — “ACCIDENTAL” AND “ANTICIPATED” SUICIDE: a former late brother-in-law and neighbours from the village

At the seaside there were also alcoholics, and somewhat more drug users from the generation older than mine. There was a father and son who lived nearby. Both were decent men. The father had once received a *slap* from my father when he set out on a “vengeance campaign” against everyone who had wronged him in the village and on the boat — supposedly because he was a “city dweller from Zagreb.” They had also thrown stones at my grandfather because he was a professor, and so on. After my father took up karate they no longer bothered anyone. That particular man was otherwise not quarrelsome. He said: “You know, it was *such and such a person* who was responsible for that — I was not directly involved...” In general he was peaceable, and by the time of my generation he would simply sit outside the shop drinking and talking to people. Like his son, however, he was almost never sober.

When a stronger gust of wind came it threw him off the bend near the church and he fell onto concrete and died. His son — whom I used to see in the shop, as I did others who have since died of cancer after I had happened to stroke them on the head, not knowing why — had been going fishing with that same late acquaintance of his. Both of them are dead today, both under fifty. At the time, the son had thought the man was drunk on the floor and began mocking him, nudging him with his foot to get up and telling him everything was ready for squid fishing. It was a beautifully warm September evening while I was home alone, walking with my cat. I had spoken briefly with my first wife, who was already working in Zagreb, said goodnight, and carried on through the lane in admiration of

how lovely the evening could be. The moon was full, the neighbours who passed greeted me warmly, the cat ran ahead contentedly and found a friend. The calm and warmth were such that I was almost sorry to go inside. I lay down and left the shutters half-open so the light could filter into the room. I was at ease — not even listening to music.

At that same moment, the acquaintance saw that the man was not reacting and not pretending. He checked and found no vital signs. By the time the ambulance arrived — access always difficult, given the terrain, the stairways and paths, and the ongoing local disputes — it was already too late. I believe a boat came from Mimice, though I am not certain. The official version was that he was wet when he touched a light switch in a beach house that had not been fully renovated. A second version held that, beyond the inherent damp and the alcohol, there may also have been an independent overdose. The following day I heard that the person I had recently seen was gone.

"Do you know what happened?" a close neighbour asked me — one with whom I am on good terms. I froze. "He died..." That is the shock of the unforeseen: you are startled and reminded of how fragile we all are. A second neighbour told me she would not wish it on an enemy — a mother who had lost both a husband and a son within a few years. Something similar happened to another neighbour too. In those other cases cancer was involved, and I would not venture into causalities, as the people concerned were ordinary sinners or even exemplary human beings. One was suspected of theft and dealing in stolen goods, drugs, and weapons, and had even served a brief prison term — but that too was unproven and unrelated to the death. What we have here is a direct suicide, though one that had begun long before it happened: through carelessness, through overdose, through accumulated ruin.

I went to the funeral, shaken and grieving. At it, some girls asked how I was doing, or simply did not greet me. He had a large funeral. Some were surprised I had come, given that I had no direct connection to the family and we had not even been on particularly good terms. But despite

his reputation, many came, because he was young, not a criminal, and something of a symbol of his generation and of the local community. What struck me, as always, was that the shock seemed to stay only at the surface. One woman asked how I was with a breezy independence, as if our lives had nothing to do with the life and death around us. Perhaps they do not, directly — and perhaps panegyrics in church are not always called for — but these things shake reality. I answered: "Badly. How else would I be?" She neither heard nor registered it. I have never quite believed how genuinely unempathetic people can be in their souls. I had exchanged only a few sentences with him in my life, and yet I was deeply shaken — from grief to anger — that he had ended before fifty, even knowing that the apple does not fall far from the tree. At least formally, and out of some impulse to pay respect — to him, or to a young life — they lit sparklers, we carried the coffin, and the grave was covered in flowers on every side. I was the last to linger, to look quietly and say my farewell to him in silence.

More striking still were two other men from the village, also in their forties or early fifties, slightly older than me. They each had their reputations. One had used drugs and been into poker and online gambling — reportedly his parents had to sell their flat. And yet on the other side he was not aggressive, successful in renting his apartment, popular with his nephews. He lit sparklers and sang at the funeral. The other was a man who was correct enough towards us but not someone you trifled with. He belonged to a somewhat more dangerous milieu, had a reputation, and his family carried its own stories I will not go into. My great-grandfather had even been godfather at his or his father's baptism. There were no property disputes, no conflicts, nothing between us. He had some military history, but he had married, had children, built a house with a pool — what he was involved in and how was not my concern. He was simply the one person in the village you did not play games with. Most strikingly, in his youth he had always been the dead man's closest friend — always at sea together, always in the boat — and now he was the one holding the coffin as it was lowered into the grave. What struck me, despite that dignified gesture, was a

strange coldness and faint disorientation in his eyes. I put it down to his hard, sporting character and paid it no great attention.

Less than two months later I heard from my father and read in the papers that he had been taken in for questioning. He was suspected, charged, and later convicted of ordering the murder of his godfather and business rival from a nearby village — a former partner. He had not killed the man himself but was reportedly the instigator, and in a well-known local restaurant and cemetery he had been finalising his plans during those very days. I was shocked and saddened again, because I could not believe how many of us think that death and the law apply only to others. Here too the preceding steps had led to self-destruction and everything contrary to what was expected and intended. He was also young, and life and upbringing had still been ahead of him. The youthful infractions — alleged car theft, an assault on a police officer — had already been wiped clean, rehabilitated, or forgotten. I had genuinely wanted a happy life for him. In prison, however, he attempted to cut his wrists. Over the years, through various appeals, I would hear only sporadic news — that he had collapsed in his chair, fallen silent, or clashed with other inmates over a match or the television.

One summer evening, returning by car with my new wife to sleep in the old village, a large black car sped past us. I thought: what luck that I or the dog were not in the middle of the road. But at the same moment something rang in my ears — this was not reckless driving, because nobody drives like that on that uphill stretch; something was happening. The car stopped above their house, near our plot. I moved closer to see or hear what was going on in that August evening. I did not need to come very close. I heard shouting and sobbing. I could already guess, though not precisely. An older woman — the mother — was crying out: "My son, my son... he is gone, my son is dead, God help me, my boy..." Her son-in-law with a grandchild had also come out of the car and was calming her, saying something like: "Mum is just tired and worried, that is why she is crying..." — the kind of cover story I had often seen through even as a child. The next

day I opened the news and read: "*... he was found peacefully dead in his cell during the night. There are no signs of violence and an investigation is underway.*" Later it was reported that his lawyer had initiated proceedings to lift the official secrecy and investigate the institution's responsibility and the compulsory psychological treatment he had undergone. As far as I know, no substances had been smuggled in. What harm the medications had done, and what diagnosis or sedation he had been given — I cannot say. But his lawyer's argument was that precisely those medications had caused the accident. I do not know the results of the investigation and will not speculate. The point is that this was not the razor-blade attempt — increasingly common in prisons despite all controls — but cardiac arrest and an alleged medication side effect. And yet when I speak of "*anticipated*" suicide, I am pointing precisely to the steps that preceded all of this: each person acting with their own logic, their own justifications — yet the result leading inevitably toward ruin. I was less surprised this time. It simply confirmed that some things lead mathematically to the destruction of a life, a family, and of others — through wrong decisions, revenge, arson, debt, habit, on through disciplinary punishment and suicide attempts — until in the end death arrives when it is least expected, and responsibility falls on no one, and the matter will not even be recorded as suicide.

The first man I mentioned is still alive — though I had one of my rare conflicts at the seaside partly because of him. The heat, a baby, and guests (the beginning of one causal chain) and our apartment having no air conditioning led me to stand on the road with a sign advertising free rooms. I was hot, nervous, tired, but not without a certain nerve — and not the only one doing it, just among the last. I sat with my legs stretched out in front of me holding the sign. As he drove past he called out: "You look great..." I did not know at first what he meant, but later he was asking after me outside the shop, and my neighbour told him to leave me alone — I had been left without guests and simply wanted to earn and fill the gap, even if today it is unusual and technically even punishable. Instead of calling the police or doing anything similar, he came back to provoke me from his car. Although by many measures his family had no greater standing or deeper

roots in the village than mine, they were economically more successful, and he had reason to think I had fallen low. Someone without education, known for drugs, was reproaching me — a joker but a "clean", reputable, educated representative of my Marušić millennial generation — and with some justification, for appearing to have dropped below my station. But for precisely that reason I was not going to let him lecture me in a public place about what I did or did not do for my dignity and the village's. I had no desire to explain my contributions.

"Are you a local?" he asked. "I am," I answered — though in truth I spend most of the year in Zagreb. "Then how can you shame your place like this?" "And what business is it of yours?" "Excuse me? Well, you shouldn't have said that..." He began unfastening his belt, opening the car door on the uphill slope, and approaching. I was frightened — although he was not skilled, he was large. I had been training all summer but was not used to street fights. "Are you going to hit me?" I asked, and began backing away, leaving my things behind. He kept coming. I struck him with my fist — only on the lip — turned and ran. I expected him to follow, but when I looked back I saw him holding his mouth, standing still, mumbling. At first I was relieved he had stopped. But then something strange began. I thought he was pretending, but in the heat he began swaying, hallucinating, wandering, leaning against a wall — and I did not know what was happening. He sat down on the ground and keeled over onto the pavement near the bus stop, arms and legs splayed. I began to worry, though I had not yet processed what was happening. When I came closer I saw that from the fall he had struck his head and there was a small pool of blood, and he was losing consciousness.

Although nearly a minute had passed since my defensive blow, his health — weakened by drugs or whatever else — had given way and he was visibly swollen. I was not thinking then about my legal theory of adequate causation or *conditio sine qua non* — whether I was the necessary but not the sole cause of what had happened and what could objectively be attributed to me in court. That was all very far away. What mattered was

the human reality: panic that his life was in danger, and through that my own conscience, my own future, my own reputation, and my legal safety. From an ordinary bit of roadside shade I had reached the end of the day close to not just a fight but a death and a prison sentence. I called on the Virgin Mary and on fate and on anything I could think of — please do not let him die, because the whole village will think I am a murderer without anyone asking how or why it came to this. I called my father in desperation, then the ambulance, then the police, and people appeared out of nowhere, like mushrooms after rain. He was not breathing for several minutes and was in clinical death. I did not know how to roll him onto his side in my panic, let alone give him mouth-to-mouth — and I was also thinking about my own health and the fact that I had not been the one to attack first. One larger young man who appeared looked at me with disgust and pity: "How could you..." Because I had heard that recently someone in Imotski had been kicked in the head and still had not regained consciousness, and concrete is the most dangerous enemy. But I poured so much energy into explaining, into weeping, and into helping the injured man, that even his parents, the villagers, and later the police and ambulance could see that I was rooting for him and helping — and they immediately lost the impression that I or anyone else had caused the violence. The same young man offered to testify if needed that I had helped to the maximum. There was no performance in it — I was genuinely rooting for both of us. He came to on his side by some miracle, but had to be lifted onto a stretcher and taken to Split, which he refused and was bewildered by, saying he could not believe it was not a dream. I encouraged him to hold on. We could barely lift him, he was so heavy. The crowd dispersed and I voluntarily waited for the police, whom I had called myself.

Two young officers arrived, and later one burly, serious inspector. He asked immediately what had happened, but when he saw me going back to the very beginning (*ab ovo*), he said: "What did you study to love talking so much?" After that he continued joking with his colleagues, who politely escorted me to the detention unit in Omiš. Here I am again, I thought. Every time without ever imagining in my sleep that this day would bring it. They

filled in the forms and told me not to worry — they would not "rough me up" — and that they would return me to the village, meaning I could go. But they would check whether his condition worsened by morning, in which case I would have to return or face remand custody or whatever criminal procedure and misdemeanour law I had long since sat required. By morning, however, his condition had not worsened. I received a fine of a few hundred kuna for disturbing the peace and was told his diagnosis was only a concussion. Since we were already in misdemeanour territory, I could not and should not be tried criminally for the same act — and nor was he. He did not file a civil claim or speak to me again, though I went back out to the street the next day and to the shop as usual. He did, however, regain consciousness and had already started claiming — or perhaps hallucinating — that I had insulted his parents. Perhaps he wanted to justify himself, but he had already lost what standing he had had "outside the shop," while people questioned or even praised me for having "shut him up," because he always acts important. Someone known for violence even praised me. His grandfather had killed himself — blown himself up with a grenade — because of family tensions, so that people from the village had had to collect his organs and limbs in a radius of a hundred metres, barely able to tell what was what. That was why we had strained relations with them, though never a direct conflict, and I never accepted a drink or their pleasures when I supposedly became an "equal" and respected member of the community. Because that community and that generation were simply not mine — and violence and those stories never interested me. Mine were the ones with whom I played basketball, played guitar, occasionally drank and looked for girls or kissed in younger years. Of drugs, crime, and violence there was no talk. There were only childish jibes and stupidities we made among ourselves and toward the neighbours. But even that family had its problems and the burden of its own history and suicide, and dealt with them through prestige, force, weapons, cars, and boats. In short, many were dying out, and many children were paying the price. Not for sin as sin, but for burdens and various wrongs and bitterness that leave a mark and an instability in the family as such. Another friend who had been the most

upright of all around had fled those problems and the drugs into overwork — and marriage and reproduction had become a global problem among the local tribes and surnames. I literally watch the dispersal and dying-out of lineages that had lived and survived in that place for eight hundred years, something I have written and researched about. And at the end of it all I saw a comment below my own documentary about the birthplace, from that very man who had nearly died on the road because of his own poor health, his provoking of life, and the web of circumstance — who had almost sent me to prison: *"Our late grandfathers are surely up there now sweetly keeping each other company, playing chess and cards together again..."*

The most affecting case for me personally was that of a former brother-in-law, about thirty years old. He was honest, uncertain how he would build a future and become the head of a household, because daughters and sons-in-law or potential partners kept arriving while he felt pushed aside in everything and did not know what to count on. With girls it never seemed to go for him, and he kept losing and changing jobs. Mostly he worked the land and trained, and was very strong. But because of family crises without any real plan for dividing roles and responsibilities, he was highly unstable. He got into fights easily and would drink himself into trouble. He even took a beating from his own village at a local *festa*. In the mornings he would vomit, drive without a licence, and cause accidents. He was in a motorbike accident with a friend and barely survived — he had several operations on his legs, and only a helmet saved his life. He had apparently insulted some people without realising it about the war, and he would also tease me in front of others — calling me a Dalmatian, though he seemed to think it was a joke. He did not understand the respect owed to others. Yet he was also perceptive and honest, and he loved his sisters and, in his way, me. He would not take advice about real responsibility in life, did not much respect other people's traditions, and lived somewhat lost. When I came to play with their dog, the dog would even choose me over him. But it was my fault for coming onto "other people's" land and trying to earn through the family farm and depending on their help. Given how many

nights I spent there, I was received reasonably well — even if conflicts, misunderstandings, religious fervour, and alcohol were also part of the picture. When he came to a baptism I was glad to see him. It was not yet eight in the evening when everyone had gone, and he had drunk so much that he drove his car into a wall and then punched it several times with his fists. I said something and he came at me — hit me and threw me to the ground. Although I gave something back, I had bruises on my leg for days. I did not report him and forgave him, and he apologised. But even at a wedding he could not hold himself through the morning without drinking — he skipped and slept through the entire ceremony in the church and only appeared in the evening. We had even considered hiring security. Yet although he was volatile, he was not dangerous or cruel. He would still say to me: "You're sleeping with my sister every day and here I am struggling with the neighbours and the local healers..." He never married, and I do not know how he bore the separation and my cousin's arrival as the new son-in-law, even though the two of them were similar in temperament — both from the Zagorje and Turopolje way of life.

Generally, there was always something secretive, something oddly negative brewing in that family and among the siblings and adults — and yet it was as if they all tried very hard to have peace, harmony, happiness, and grandchildren. Then one day, several years after the separation, I was chatting online with an old acquaintance from that area when she said quite by chance: "I'm so sorry — did you know? It's awful..." I was taken aback. "What? I don't know anything." "What happened — all of Jaska is surprised and devastated, I think it was even on the radio..." "What happened?" I already knew what time it was. "He died — just now, on the Ascension, in June." Unbelievable. I immediately called a local friar I remembered from childhood to check whether it was true and what the cause was. He confirmed it. He remembered him from early on and said he was not superstitious about it having happened on exactly that day — but the official version was that after the midday Mass he had simply gone home, lain down, and fallen asleep and not woken up; they found him dead of heart failure. I do not know how or why. I know he had used a little

cannabis and amphetamines, but the genetics, the psychology, the motive, or the "karma" — I cannot say. I was frightened, because I no longer quite believed that death had started claiming my generation and people even younger than me. Is it punishment? Is it a sign that we are all healthy until one day we are not?

While their dog died in my very arms — he had loved me and died slowly, and I apologised to him for my sins toward the family and gave him some peace to drift off and stiffen there, enormous and heavy — I said farewell to him too. We dug a grave for the dog all day. But for the brother-in-law I know nothing, because I had not heard from him or greeted him since. I do not believe it was connected to me, but I heard that his mother had fallen ill with cancer, and that his sister did not wish to remarry because benign tumours had apparently returned or new health problems had come. Their father did not die — remarkably — though I had accompanied him to hospitals for operations on prostate cancer and large colonic diverticula, which had to wait on each other because of late detection and which coincided terribly. He was in tremendous pain and had lost a tremendous amount of weight. Life was leaving him, but he survived. I wish all the children the very best, and I had wanted the brother-in-law to marry and have children too. Instead he died so suddenly, rounding off one more tragedy in that family. Once again I saw the long chain of "*provoking life*" and instability before the event, and it did not altogether surprise me — though I still could not quite believe it. I think that beyond the official version, a possible and relevant reading is that he too took his own life — implicitly or explicitly. Because it is often never said. The alternatives of a "peaceful sleep" are mentioned instead. I would not be surprised — but in any case it was a strange and sorrowful self-destruction, and a tightening of the circle around our lives and choices. And we are not so young any more, and there were enough opportunities.

8. CASE — "ACCESSORY" SUICIDE

This may be the only type of suicide that is not only altruistic but spiritually deliberate and free — undertaken to preserve a greater good, to escape a lesser evil, or out of fear and shame. It is a borderline and rare case, philosophically ambiguous too, and something to which we will return. One might also call it a brave, non-depressive, and unprovoked suicide. It is equally possible to ask whether it is permissible or not. It resembles the choice between a one-hundred-percent-certain painful death and euthanasia — territory of nuance that we will not fully enter here; we are looking at a pure type.

Here we also find various cases of "escaping from pain," such as the well-known case of the singer **Miša Kovač**, who once attempted suicide in a building near mine, driven by the loss of his son. Then there is my wife's friend — today a successful, married woman with a family and firm religious convictions from childhood (they once even went together to a convent) — who wanted to take her own life because of her *ugliness*: not ugliness imposed from outside through mockery but an internal acceptance and vision of herself as something she did not wish to look at. She drank a mixture of detergent and other substances and fell asleep. Her mother and my wife helped bring her back. Today virality is a particular problem and cause of suicide, because our reality so often leans on the virtual — which is anonymous and far crueller.

9. CASE — SUICIDE ATTEMPTS AND "STIGMA"

When I used to go with my father to the weekend cottage in Vrbovsko where my grandmother lived, there was a man everyone was fond of. Because of certain difficulties he lay down on the railway tracks and decided to end his life — in a clearly very painful way. He was fortunate that the driver saw him and managed to signal the train to stop in time. After that he never attempted it again, but I always carried in my mind "Marijan who wanted to kill himself." Whenever we drove past that spot or

spoke with him, I had a strange dread. He would talk normally afterwards — even cheerfully — but he remained in some way "*stigmatised*" by that attempt. At the seaside there was also the case of a very witty man with a pronounced belly who even reproached me for staring at it. He was an electrician who constantly cracked jokes and whom everyone called "*Struja*" — "the Current." He once attempted suicide by jumping from a cliff, but it was too low and he only ended up in hospital with minor injuries. Afterwards, whenever I passed him or got mildly annoyed, I would mutter to myself or quietly to a friend: "...the suicidal one." And so I too participated in that stigmatisation. In the meantime he died too, and the example raises the question of whether the greater problem lay with the older or the younger members of his family. Often members of a family influence one another through their lives, decisions, and circumstances. His son was not violent at all — but he had been in the war, and a fragment of a mine had taken off part of his foot. He separated from his first wife, even throwing tables and beds through the window for all to hear. He smoked and perhaps used drugs, but he survived. He loved his daughter very much; as a small child she was sweet and charming, and would wander late at night along the road without supervision. Later she became a successful state-level competitor in *taekwondo*.

10. CASE — "SYSTEMIC" AND "AUTISTIC" SUICIDES: my choirmistress and my dentist's colleague

Although my grandmother too had her autism and her failure to understand where her own life was heading, she at least had some degree of awareness — or at least decision and action. For my choirmistress from the children's choir, the combination was different: underdeveloped social and practical intelligence together with the innate features of autism, and the traumas she had lived through. What was actually happening? It concerns the choirmistress of one of the most successful children's choirs in Croatia and Zagreb — one I had joined as a small child because I had talent,

even though later I struggled more and more to hit the notes as my voice broke, until I finally had my "five minutes" recording a solo on a cassette and performing live. We performed across Croatia, at the Lisinski concert hall, in Međugorje and Mostar, and aired on radio and television. That neighbourhood choir had nothing but her genius and an arranger from the band "*Drugi način*" — who is also now deceased. And yet in the mid-nineties we won second place with the jury and first with the audience — an unimaginable blow to the perennial absolute winner ("*Klinci s ribnjaka*"). That competition lasted until the choir's collapse, which began with corruption, gifts, and the selection of singers who had no talent whatsoever. The choirmistress allowed her credibility to erode easily and then tried to push an elephant through the eye of a needle. Although from the start I could see there were some problems with her daughters and some discord in her marriage, I did not know how far it would go. Her husband was an excellent craftsman who had laid our parquet floors. Initially we assumed it was a clash of professions and backgrounds, or perhaps jealousy. But there were much deeper things at work. In her final years she was constantly coming to give lessons — including to me — just so as not to be at home. She would stay at our place until late at night, sometimes accepting payment and sometimes not, showing signs of instability and even asocial behaviour. Not aggressive — but she would speak of enduring domestic violence, and my father gave her hundreds of pieces of advice on how to defend herself. Little by little she began to fade, going more and more often to Istria to stay with her mother. They both died there, not long after. She was not old, but the whole downward spiral of bad decisions, mental states, and innate naivety had brought her to the point where the choir and her own psychological and physical — or spiritual — integrity had collapsed. She had been, like my grandmother, a superb pedagogue and composer for children, and completely unable to cope with adult life or adult understanding. It is sorrowful to watch such a beautiful, intelligent, and successful woman being exploited, losing herself entirely because of all that distraction. And yet her conduct and reasoning were often irritating and incomprehensible — she simply did not grasp things

even after hours of conversation, yet would hit a note and a pitch like Mozart. That, unfortunately, is the burden of genius; though I cannot convince myself that beyond the innate limitations there was not also some spiritual laziness or covetousness at work.

The second case is that of my dentist — or more precisely, her colleague. I saw my dentist recently on the street and was struck by how she looked. She has retired, and she had been fixing my teeth since the war; she was younger than I am now back then. She is skilled, professional, firm, and attractive — and she always lights up when she sees me. Since retirement she has been going through a crisis much like my father's — she finds it hard not to be practising. She also cared for her mother into very old age, after which she rented out the flat. Into that flat moved a journalist with children and an African wife. Since children were involved, they had protected status against debts and eviction. Something similar had happened with my father, whose parents had strategically left him with his grandparents so as not to lose their tenancy rights under socialism — damaging but also providential. Now the situation is different, but it came to the point where the tenants paid neither rent nor utilities, and so destroyed and dirtied the flat that after empty promises and a prolonged eviction its value had dropped by ninety percent. My dentist says she did not even manage to air the place for days and sold only the square footage and location for a few thousand euros. She told me she had not wanted to say any of this to her husband and was barely coping mentally — along with a small pension. She spoke of how the system is capable of destroying a person, and a member of the educated professions, to an unimaginable degree. I tried to bring her down to earth in the Franklian sense, telling her that we must claim a freedom of decision even under the hardest conditions: "It is easy to say all this when we have a firm footing. Let us not quite kill ourselves or do something wrong — we are too valuable for that. Let us simply survive right now. If Frankl could survive the Nazi camps, what is so hard about our situation? Let us forget the flat and everything. Easy to say. But you are living in another flat with your husband, you are still mobile and in health — stop letting the flat define your meaning and freedom, and

you will be free. The same is true for me at the seaside with the house — I do not care about its value or the grievances if I cannot control the outcome." She looked at me with something like joy, but would still reply: "Yes, but the system gets you in the end..." "Do you see how wrongly you are framing this? As soon as you say — the system destroyed me — you give it power and importance. You accept it as your weakness and destruction. Or when you say you cannot accept a change or an injustice, that is — to put it bluntly — your problem and your decision, and you are not pressed into a single option. Let us say now, when it cannot get worse — well, I am glad to be talking with you, and that too is meaning and happiness. I will put this in my book, and now I am going on an outing. Do you see how beautiful the weather is? We are out walking while my father lies unable to move and my grandmother has died and others have been hit by the war. What is lacking in this fresh air? We ought to be ashamed of how well off we are and how selfish and idealistic we are." It felt strange — me, practically her son's age — delivering motivational speeches in the middle of Maksimirska Street. But I had the sense it had encouraged and cheered her, despite everything. Since we are in a similar situation and similar years, though I have gone through it on an accelerated course, I felt I had to show by example that sometimes even those older than us remain stuck in an orthodox stance and need to be guided, just as they guided us. That is why I have not lost faith in young people as I sometimes have in the old.

In any case, the bigger problem was not with her but with the colleague she mentioned. I did not remember the woman, but it was a dentist who worked in another school clinic: a young mother and a good dentist. New regulations had been introduced requiring children's dentists to take on other groups and tasks — work still within the profession but outside their specialisation. The reason I cannot fully explain — perhaps cost-saving, patient saturation, a shortage of staff, or something else. But that bureaucratic change became for her the beginning of the end — or at least she experienced it that way. "For me to work with dentures and the elderly now after all these years?" she would say. She could not — but she

also did not *want to* — accept either that obligation or the option of resigning, changing her field, or accepting the social assistance and early pension she had in fact been offered. Psychologically she felt she had not "earned" it and began to crack. She was given several mental illnesses including depression, and had also to care for a young son. She was treated in hospital and at home. She died very young from those mental illnesses, having lost almost her mind — and she had been a doctor. Some time later, posters began appearing around the neighbourhood that a young man was missing. It turned out he had not gone missing and had not been found — he had been discovered in the flat after several weeks. He had hanged himself from the light fitting, and before he had even come of age.

11. CASE — "IDEOLOGICAL" AND "INDIRECT" SUICIDES

While for some types one can "predict" that they have been digging their own grave long before they fall into it, here the case is even murkier — though it has its own connection, because these are living experiments I have followed for thirty years, living among these people and observing types of character. In the village in summer there was a prominent Split doctor and karateka. There had been some family problems and divisions. He wanted his son to become a doctor too, but the son did not manage it — though he did become a doctor of science and a docent at an entirely different faculty. I would often walk in the afternoons through the neighbourhood, listening to arguments, watching customs, family gatherings. He was not a bad man, but known to be both brave and fearful — he would get very worked up when children teased him, which only encouraged people further. He and my father would spar in karate; then he would complain he had been hit too hard. But he was an interesting and capable figure, outwardly cool, even slightly small and grotesque. He was the last in Split to hold a strike for doctors' labour rights. During *Covid*, he distinguished himself as a passionate opponent of vaccination. In the end

he died — among the last in the area to do so — of *Covid* itself, and unvaccinated.

12. CASE — "ACCIDENTAL" AND "TRENDING" SUICIDES

Here I would include only one well-known example — a rare film after which I could not get up quickly from my seat. Nor could the audience. It is the found-footage documentary "*Manifesto*" (dir. Angie Vinchito), shown at ZagrebDox, which ends with footage of two young, handsome Russian teenagers who broadcast their suicide live. It all began, quite literally, by accident. They were not particularly troubled, and they had a relationship that circumstances had turned forbidden. A conflict arose between the boy and the girl's mother, and he shot her in the leg with an air rifle. Since her father was connected to military and police units, the two fled, knowing they would face punishment. They were in an abandoned cottage, talking freely — beautiful and apparently innocent. Yet something was building, though it could barely be felt. He got hold of weapons — not such a great shock, taken alone. But from the moment he began shooting outside at a car and then at a dog, that was the point of (apparent) no return: the loss of innocence, and the erasure of the way back. They expected the police at any moment and were preparing for nothing less than *suicide*. While they broadcast it live, some encouraged them, some tried to talk them out of it, and some laughed — the typical viral dynamic, though they had themselves initiated it. There were no particular political messages: just as many young people do every few years, they felt like *Werther* — lonely and lost in the system and in time — a textbook anti-heroic *Romeo and Juliet*. You felt both pity and reproach, but found yourself looking more toward the system than toward them. What shocked people, however, was that they did not actually want to show their suicide — they wanted it to remain "private." They arranged their shotguns pointing at each other and planned and talked without great fear. That uncanny silence while their voices carry is among the saddest and most chilling things I have

ever heard or seen — no horror at all, only silence and the conversation of a young, lost couple in love. She asked whether it would hurt; he told her it would not and to press after him. A few seconds passed and a shot was heard. He fell first, it seems. Then she. The livestream ended. That moment — the sense that this should never have happened, that no one had foreseen it, that death had arrived in an instant and that the people who had been present just moments ago were gone — left a bitter taste in everyone. Both shock and a kind of dazed admiration, or an encounter with a truth that is heavy even in today's world where violence is trivialised and even promoted. But this is not violence — it is the mystique of love, of lostness, and of death; of suicide as an eternal mystery. He wrote to her beforehand: *"I loved you, I love you, and I will love you forever..."* Although it is rare, such things sometimes trigger a trend — as in the early 2000s when young people began jumping from cathedral towers with no apparent depressive motive.



— Denis Muravyov and Katerina Vlasova, Pskov, Russia, 14 November 2016.

13. CASE — "MEDIA-DRIVEN" AND "BALCONY" SUICIDES

Although much of what happens today can be put down to "doomscrolling" or dark tourism and the violence of the news — as well as our own susceptibility to debates and to following events — very few people actually go all the way. At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, with the supposed threat of a Third World War not long after the pandemic and the earthquake, a woman in my neighbourhood near Maksimirska jumped from a window. All I saw was a body lying motionless on the ground, and before it I had heard an impact like a large mattress falling. I saw the daughter and son-in-law weeping while the police calmed them and moved others away. Around them was a puddle of blood, and the girl kept asking "why??" and trying to see whether there were any signs of life. Above, the open window swung in the wind — a terrible sign that a living person had been there just moments ago and had passed sentence from the fourth floor. Afterwards I saw a candle placed on that spot, and whenever I look up today and see those closed shutters a shudder comes over me, a sadness, and I say a prayer.

Perhaps a year later, something happened even closer by — and I did not know it was a suicide until someone told me in the shop. It was not someone who lived there but a person who had calmly walked in through the entrance and made his way up to an open door with a small balcony looking out over the car park. I do not know which floor, but again at least the fourth. My grandmother was still alive then and had been watching what was going on and why a tent and police tape had appeared. Afterwards there was again a candle, where I prayed and looked up at that ledge and asked myself what it must have been that drove that man to such a final act. I said to him in silence: "As long as I am alive I will not forget you, though I do not know you. I want to unite my life — and my pain or my death — with yours in solidarity, so that you know you were not alone, not lost, not unloved, and not a coward. It is precisely people like you who need help, and let us join our souls together wherever we travel. But I will

dedicate my life and try to "*annul*" your act by doing the opposite of suicide."

14. CASE — "FALSE" AND "ILLUSORY" SUICIDES, AND "INTERACTIVE" ONES: a neighbour

Illusory or "promissory" suicides are those where the threat seems, to my mind, so hollow that it is really more of an internal and external conflict. Although I too fell into this category at times, I know it best from a neighbour and distant relative in the village who was known to use quite a lot of drugs. But he was intelligent — he even justified his habits — and his father, who died later, was a good man who liked me but was always caught up in neighbourhood, legal, and political disputes, both with himself and with others. He would secretly report neighbours and so on. He made and unmade friendships and enmities, but could see that life was slowly pressing in and focused on his daughter and grandchildren. His son, however, had never found permanent work, had not married, had no children, slept long, used drugs, and caused traffic accidents. The father even said once that he wished he could kill a troublesome neighbour so as to be rid of two problems at once. Although he loved and endured his son — and I am not claiming that sins as such are what follow both of them, as much as a family disorder that sometimes affects the stability of certain members — it came to the point where, despite various detox programmes and periods of substituting alcohol for drugs, his son threatened to kill himself and climbed to the top of a mountain. While my mother had been so panicked on my account, people took measures and spoke to him by phone, not knowing whether he would really do it. He did not. He did not even try — he was simply not that type. He was philosophically and religiously minded, intelligent, and in truth more lost than resolved about anything. But he had a relatively firm stance, and I always knew nothing would happen. When he slept long, he had a firm stance; when he worked he would work as much as he chose; when he did not want to work he had

a justification. But he was in fact predictable — similar to me in a way, predictable in his unpredictability. Since he stopped risking his life and breaking the law he has even had a few girlfriends and reduced the drug use, and through some genetic resilience, at fifty he looks better than most people his age. Although unstable and putting all sorts of things into himself, he is for now completely healthy, rational, and even somewhat productive — contrary to all expectation and stigma. He has not, however, been able to inherit from his father or to reproduce, because the father in the meantime died suddenly of colon cancer. That affected me deeply too. The last thing I heard him say on the phone, while he was in hospital, was: "Here I am struggling..." — and he hung up after I told him I was looking forward to his recovery and return to the village to meet my new wife. He had many good qualities and was one of the local figures from our lineage who was still something of a personality — he had sympathy and understanding for me, even though as a child he once made me wipe every drop of paint off a car after I wrote "I love you" on the road for some Czech girls. My father had long warned him to stop drinking adulterated wine, but he would not listen. Since he did not make his own wine — or his son would ruin it, stealing it and adding water until it went off — he would buy from me and the neighbours, but mostly ended up on cheap "Mirogoj plonk" where they sell wine without a vineyard. It is possible that this brought on further polyps and the carcinoma, along with late detection — because many in the villages have died of bad chemical wines, and I am a witness to that. I stopped drinking myself since I no longer produce my own wine. And he was not an alcoholic, any more than my ancestors were. So it was that combination of persistence and disobedience, problems with himself and his son and the cellar and the labour force, that also led to a death that was, in my view, a form of suicide — despite the "healthy climate and food." In that intertwining of father and son — not to say curse — I also have the example of a neighbour who is a dermatologist but so unreasonable, unsociable, calculating, and a kind of unintelligent and unempathetic sociopath that he has fallen out with everyone in the village and behaves in a transactionally self-interested way, with no real idea of

what is good for him or for those around him. He spent years with a few others who were similarly "alone against the whole village" and whom everyone had supposedly cheated — a degree of social unintelligence that offended everyone, damaged every interest, and created a raft of quarrels I have never seen matched. But beyond that intellect — which of course believes it is doing the best it can — he carries a great burden in his family, and I would attribute to that burden a damage connected less to stigma or spiritual inheritance than to the destruction of the psychological, social, and neurological systems of those who find themselves in the family of great criminals or suicides. His mother is still alive and known for her sharpness, but his father — who was respected and said by many to have been a wonderful man — committed a horrific suicide before the grandchildren were born, or around that time. One reason was marital problems, another financial and banking. But the *manner* in which he did it is simply terrifying, and it spills "blood and instability" — not only shame or sin — onto the family and onto humanity and society: he cut his own throat with the large butcher's knife used to slaughter livestock. Few people have probably ever seen what it looks like when an artery in a human throat is severed. It is an enormous quantity of blood that flows — first in a surge, then like the dregs of a demijohn — and leaves traces, bodily and spiritual, in an enormous dark-red pool: the ruin of a being and a soul, something that people must "clean up." Some seem inclined to inherit the very gene of alcoholism and suicidality — but in this case it is more a social suicidality and a creation of unrest, and I am genuinely sorry for the son.

15. CASE — "RECKLESS" AND "HYPERACTIVE" SUICIDES: my grandfathers

My father did not end that way, but in his eternal struggles with others he came close — like the neighbour I mentioned — to receiving increased doses of sedation and driving the system or the doctors "against" him, when it was in no one's interest and regardless of who was right. The

logic of survival comes first, and when followed it usually frees both the person and those around them. As for my grandfathers, both came to grief physically by refusing to accept that they were becoming less and less mobile. As soon as they tried to go out on their own — or after a quarrel with their wife, along the corridor or outside in the village or the city — they would fall and people would have to help them, or they would lie in that position for a very long time. After some time, or after such an event, they lost the will and developed an excessive fear of walking, and little by little died in bed. One grandfather bore it stoically while I was watching a Dinamo vs. Ajax match and cheering in his ear; the other shouted and quarrelled with my grandmother every day. The first would sometimes swear quietly under his breath. My professor grandfather — whom I will mention again later in more detail — soon dislocated his arm and in the night broke his shoulder: a direct path to hospital and soon to the care home where he died, while we went through the torment of bureaucracy and inspections. Even as he was gasping and fighting for breath — his body having declined sharply after the anaesthetic — he still recognised me and nodded. The day before he had even spoken normally. But at that age, and with a double arm fracture plus a near-operative prostate that had worsened, the operation was counterproductive — as is well known. That is why Dr **Bedalov** and the council decided not to operate on the prostate either, but an ordinary fracture had brought him to his death. It all began with a quarrel with my grandmother and a fall in the street — having survived so many wars, secret services, thefts, struggles, and periods of homelessness. While I was out looking for girls at four in the morning, the moment my grandmother rang the bell I knew what hour it was.

16. CASE — "ISOLATED" SUICIDE: a neighbour

At my grandmother's in the Dalmatian hinterland we would often visit a neighbour who was a little unusual. He seemed to have special needs, or a latent aggression so invisible as to look like our own prejudice —

a pretext for spying on him, provoking him, or stirring things up for the fun of it. My father had even forbidden us to visit, and a cousin beat me for going anyway. We pretended to attack him. But he was a relative who had always been on good terms with my grandmother and helped her throughout. His brother, who never married, knew techniques and games and was always cheerful and interesting — ready to help right up to the present day. The late grandfather had been a law unto himself, giving us wine and juice and some nudge-and-wink pictures. But these were people who had lived on an estate and worked on the roads, and had been through the war and exile. They had had to flee before the RSK could conscript or harass them, knowing that perhaps some of the younger ones had joined the Croatian army after escaping, having left the old people behind because there was no other way. One of them had a son from a first marriage who was also a little unusual, and who at one point attacked us with an axe while we were teasing him — though that attack was still just a "game." He married again, taking in a woman and her grown son. I loved visiting them and socialising. In truth they were very good people, and I got to know the making of brandy and the Dalmatian interior through them, and listened to family history. He had no outbursts, earned his living, and was respected. We could call on him if we needed anything. He was cheerful, just a little stout and ruddy-faced from the modest wine he drank. Those two brothers had helped my grandmother and grandfather in their isolation far more than almost anyone else. Once at the seaside I read a news article where a person of that name had apparently been stalking a woman and child and trying to kill them, then had killed himself when blocked. My mother wept and called to find out whether it was him — but we learned it was a completely different man. Only recently, perhaps six or seven years ago, my father sent me a message: "J... has killed himself." I did not know why, or how, or when. I had not heard of any problems with his new wife or stepson or the neighbours, or that he had been drinking more than usual. He had never really been drunk or unreasonable. His face was naturally ruddy and he had already reached retirement age — and the war's *PTSD* had not markedly damaged him. As I was told, what had struck him was

retirement — but above all the death of a friend. When he learned that his closest friend had died, he took his own life out of grief and solidarity: his generation was disappearing around him. I had expected he might have some "outburst" at some point, but after all those decades in which he had disproved us and shown himself to be serious and successful — when we had seen that we had built the myth and the prejudice, and he had long disproved it — I was left astonished. Literally on the threshold of a quiet life, at his oldest and most mature, he did such a thing. In general the village down there is dying out. There is no single ethnic community left, and even "migrants" rarely stray there. That stretch around Knin is literally dead. The school is still ruined on the inside and carries some marks from the wartime camp; the fire station has been renovated and there are returnees on both sides and new houses — but it bears no resemblance to when we were young, let alone to my parents' time, when people went to school and dances there or built bicycles from shoe boxes, wire, and wood. But that general sense of disappearing prompted him to lock himself in his barn, wrap a rope, and hang himself. Since he was impulsive and strong — though not aggressive — I could picture exactly that scene, and could see it was a realistic ending to his story. But it startled me when it happened so late, so unexpectedly, with no apparent trigger, and after he had in fact rounded off his family and professional life in exemplary fashion. I had not believed that the general condition could affect the individual to that degree, nor that individual instability could pass without consequence if "the village is alive" and if the surroundings and the sense of purpose are what keep a person from such ideas. Eternal rest to him. These are not a small number of cases that I personally know to have ended in unnatural death — because natural death is itself a taboo and a rare thing. But rather than depression and joining this dark statistic, I hope that my work and the seriousness with which I approach these questions — alongside the joy of being alive and in a happy marriage — will be what makes my life a living memory and a light to the surroundings to which I have belonged.

17. CASE — UNPREDICTABLE AND DEPENDENCY-DRIVEN, SYSTEMIC OR (ILLUSORY) EXISTENTIAL AND DIGITAL SUICIDE: the owner of "my" video rental shop

One recent case has affected me in a particular way. As a child I often went to the video rental shop at weekends. I would spend a long time choosing, and I always liked to take one action film and one "noble film." Eventually the rental shops dwindled to a small number and a single owner, whom I will not name. He was young, handsome, attentive, and often wore some kind of cap. His video-rental brand was among the last surviving in the city and still had a few outlets. Although the shift to DVD had long been made, it too was starting to die out — but people still rented. I never even knew what Blu-ray was, nor do I know why there was no transition to USB. The problem, as I recall, was more bureaucratic than purely financial — and the margins were shrinking. He genuinely seemed to enjoy being among the last of his kind, and films were always playing while people browsed inside. I found the covers more interesting than the films, and would often just ask questions, discuss titles, or look for offers. For some older women he would even recommend a good erotic title, while with me he mostly discussed *The X-Files* or *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. In summer I also liked to pick something up when I was home alone, and at someone's house you simply did not dare take out the erotic ones. He loved his work, but I had never thought to ask him in detail whether this business would die out. He was perhaps the last person of whom, by appearance and manner, you would have suspected anything bad — though I did not know him well. He had become recognisable, knew his customers, and loved films, always stressing the positive side of every genre. Not long ago I read something terrible online. The moment I saw the grey image I knew it was bad, but I thought it must be something else — some sudden illness. Perhaps debts, or violence — I was not familiar with any of it. But according to the official version, after the last video rental shop closed, he disappeared. And after several months, his mother found him somewhere near a river, a meadow, or a bridge. He had taken his own life, according to reports. He was very young

— perhaps a few years older than me. In this way the VHS era died too — and that part of my youth and of his life along with it, which is the saddest thing of all. He could not reconcile himself to the change of the world, to the *Covid* situation, and to the bureaucracy. The farewell was reportedly symbolic and moving. His eyes had always radiated steadiness — at least before — and this is perhaps the most distinctive case of all, in terms of the unpredictability of the intrinsic and extrinsic, and of a professionalism and habit that sometimes becomes a burden under the "process of adaptation" to the necessary and the unnecessary. Even had he lived — a part of him would have been killed regardless.

SOCIOLOGICAL TYPES OF SUICIDE

We all remember the basic lesson on **Émile Durkheim** and his work *Suicide* from 1897. He did not look at it solely as an individual act of personal tragedy and depression but as a *social fact*, observing it through a sociological lens. I too have noticed a strange recurring statistical regularity in the annual suicide figures for a given country — something I will return to in the systemic chapters. But it is difficult to say that suicide has only social causes, or that it does not — or that society simply promotes or fails to promote it and creates the conditions. We are social beings, and statistics are social facts — and at the same time particular facts. The typology is well known, and the statistics will be later revealed:

— ***Egoistic suicide***: when the individual is *too weakly socially integrated* and feels too isolated and as if they do not belong to a community. This does not mean the person is "selfish," but statistically — at least in Durkheim's time — single people took their lives more often than married ones, and Protestants more often than Catholics or Jews. We might connect this to the question of northern alienation, and to more developed systems and cities. One must also exclude, of course, the question of bad marriages or those ending in separation or criminal acts.

— **Altruistic suicide**: here social integration is reversed — that is, *too high*. As with kamikaze pilots and people who sacrifice their lives for higher ideals and the homeland. Again the emphasis is on giving for the collective rather than compassion toward another individual.

— **Anomic suicide**: as the word itself suggests, the main problem is *anomie* — a common sociological term describing a kind of disordered state, or *lawlessness*, or at the very least the loss and contradiction of legal norms. Here one might include the bureaucratic problems that run through this book: a stock market crash, the collapse of an exchange, rising interest rates on debt repayments, various debts, evictions, certain forms of addiction, and so on.

— **Fatalistic suicide**: social integration is again *high*. This is the extreme of the feeling of imprisonment or enslavement (from inside or outside the system). Today there are certain factories in China where nets are placed around the building so that workers cannot jump — and the same thing occurred in antiquity.

"JUSTIFIED" SUICIDE

We must nonetheless bear in mind that even the physical act is not black and white — and it is precisely in the spiritual act that the true purpose or ethical weight reveals itself. For even in the legal order there exists a "weighing" — proportionality and so on — in the case of killing in lawful self-defence, necessity, or the lesser evil. Sometimes suicide can in truth be a somewhat "elevated" act. For example, if a person is sparing themselves humiliation and greater suffering. Or if they are conscious of losing their mind and of being exploited or becoming a burden on the system, and wish to save an inheritance for their children and relatives rather than signing over lifetime maintenance. And then there is the whole discussion around palliative care and passive euthanasia — whether one is dealing with "indirect" euthanasia in the broader sense, and so on. Yet the question of timing and moral risk always remains, particularly when set

against people such as **Petar Janjić Tromblon**, who abandoned his suicide attempt when taken prisoner in Vukovar battle and today writes books and bears witness. For example: despite the necessity of sport, I too "killed" my veins by sitting too long, because I had to study, write, and film for extended periods. So there too I sacrificed something for something "higher." One should not even want life at any cost here, and yet the „Drina martyrs“, as an example of „honorable suicide“, also did not have to know or foresee the outcome and intent, or there could have been other various possibilities of suffering and redemption for both the victims and the aggressors. And it is always a short-period reaction or fear, not just the belief, instead of any moralization later on.

„RATIONAL AND AUTONOMOUS“ SUICIDE

What I am describing here may fall under Stoic and rational suicide — not only altruistic types — and perhaps a certain courage and boldness in controlling one's being and values. Life, after all, is the one thing in which even God is "violent." I would often curse my parents as a last argument that certain disagreements and misfortunes were at play: "You created me — I did not create you." If a person is at all certain that their duties have become obscured and dangerous to their dignity, this may be the subject of reflection. On the other hand, "Socratic" types can often in fact represent a refusal of life under stigma — a rejection of reality, injustice, or another's perspective — which is in truth a *ressentiment* of the weaker party and can be theatrical and egocentric: a resistance to carrying one's own cross and to continuing the value of one's own life. It can also create scandal and division in a community — a sign of instability, not stability, despite the bravery. A brave act can be cowardly, and a cowardly act brave — abandoning suicide out of physical fear, yet going on to seek meaning in life. Defending one's integrity against the loss of selfhood is one thing; defending only one's desired image of dignity is another.

Here the figure of **Judas Iscariot** is worth pausing on — not as a moral verdict but as a structural case. His suicide was a punitive one: genuine remorse (Matthew uses *metamelētheis* — a change of heart and feeling, not the deeper *metanoia* of true repentance), a return of the thirty pieces of silver, a public confession — and then despair and the rope. He had political and even apostolic ambitions: he was the group's treasurer, an insider who apparently hoped to force a situation, not simply to betray. He wanted to be part of something, not merely to sell it. And yet what he did was irreversible, or so he believed. The problem was not the remorse — the remorse was real. The problem was that he could not imagine being received back into being. He misjudged the reach of forgiveness. He treated the closure of one door as the closure of all doors, and in doing so he missed the very thing the story was about. Being was not against him — being had need of him, precisely because of what he had lost. But he could not wait. His suicide, in this sense, is less a moral failure than an ontological one: the inability to trust that being could hold him after what he had done. The paradox is that the one most needed by the unfolding of the story — the one whose act had made the whole event possible — was the one who removed himself from it at the last moment. Not because he was evil, but because he could not bear to witness what his action had produced. That too is a form of self-destruction that the system — theological, social, or otherwise — rarely knows how to prevent: the destruction of a person not by indifference but by a *remorse so total it forecloses the future*.

ABOUT ME

What do I want to say? Who am I, really? I am a member of the *middle class* who is, frankly, somewhat *lost*. So are many *Millennials* — they are the ones I see most often alongside me in the waiting room. What marked us was not so much the war — we were too young — as the relentless transition: the constant excavation of past and future, the pressure of our elders, and the persistent, quietly mistaken expectation that schooling and hard work

produce a straight line to security. We were modern, well-intentioned, reasonably cheerful, and half-analogue; but we absorbed more shocks of change and crisis — above all from 2008 onwards — than any generation should have to. We also lived, it must be said, with a degree of protection.

My friends from school mostly still have no children. They are lost in their work, or caught in the "*sandwich generation*" — obligations towards both the old and the young — or they have simply withdrawn and become depressed. By contrast, the generation of my wife (Gen X) were teenagers during the war, and they absorbed the transition realistically. They kept their spirit, found a reasonable relationship with the digital world, and are now raising their Gen Z children in harmony with new values, without giving up the traditional and the social — in fact they are reviving these things more fully than we ever did. I do not know what the correct identity of the Zoomer or the coming Alpha generation turns out to be; I am not a sociologist. But at first hand I see the deficit of my own Millennial generation's hope — and its complete replacement in public and cultural life by Generation Z.

I am greatly impressed by the pragmatic and yet free and value-driven upbringing of today's students. They face alienation and mental health crises, but they do not turn them into a spectre. They refuse both self-destruction and the kind of "*cheats*" we all lived through. They value the older generation and older siblings like us, but they see that burnout must be replaced by a "*clean slate*" — an integration of old and new ideals without the cramped striving that was our trap. They are, in my view, real-optimists: they lead their lives with purpose from the start. My generation was alternately passive and then over-proactive; they do not want that trap. We were psychologically rather than physically damaged, whilst our parents' generation is now exhausted and disappearing. Today there are no authorities — but there are no delinquents either. Everyone seems equally intelligent, different yet collective, and self-assured. And they are not naive: they know where and how they were born.

Were we who are now ageing to fall into the trap of posing as embittered role models whom the young cannot understand, that would be the peak of our cyclical licentiousness, our hypocrisy and ignorance. I often notice that it is the older people who behave less civilly in public — not the young. The old are the foundation, and some conflict was inevitable; but the young know that force and rigid authority produce poor fruit. I am myself the beginning of the mix of liberal and conservative upbringing — and I have no real complaint about it, only about my own delayed development and the "depreciation of the years". Today, unfortunately, life expectancy is actually shrinking rather than approaching its maximum. Yet the young recognise patterns and generate optimism that the future, whatever it holds, will last for many decades more. Their respect for the authenticity and resilience of the older generation — those who truly had it — is already integrated into their worldview; it does not need to be imposed. So we will not fall into oblivion. The only danger is forcing our vision on to the young once more.

Although it is a difficult position, the best one available to me is that of the bridge — between the sick and the old, the dead and those arriving. Here I must be a steady educator, not a wild man and not a "sage". I do not know in what form my generation continues on the path of that "saving" of its bridge role — I hear and see too little of them. I do not want to impose myself on those younger than me, and I can no longer lean on those older.

Burnout, however, is a danger that will reach Generation Z as well as us — their confrontation with psychological fragility (and with ever-greater pressures) breeds a too-easy reach for pharmaceutical solutions. A friend of mine — **Mahkey**, a singer who has also passed through enormous life and physical transitions in ten years — told me that the old substances people once used, which our generation was warned off and which no one took any more, have simply changed shape and continue to *desensitise* people, leading to the same burnout in time. Conversations with psychologists in my day were neither pleasant nor useful — our longings and the petty violences and fears we carried were separate compartments from the

freedoms we possessed, and there was no constant "suppression" building towards some concrete neurological or spiritual collapse.

Much also depends on how deeply the genes of our *Baby Boomer* parents — who shouldered the full weight of the transition to a new, easier but less healthy life — manage to outlive their owners. The older Millennials and Gen X are already showing quiet but significant health problems. Despite healthy habits, those born around 1960 who had no addiction issues are now falling ill or dying at the same time as their elderly parents, which doubles my sense of shock. I will not predict the future; but in our time alcohol was the only real threat, while the digital world carries mixed dangers for every younger generation. Many use it moderately and as a tool; many are lost in it; many are returning radically to "nature". The mass I observe is actually a *concentrated minority* — but it is a real minority that still loves and craves the classical things: concerts, spiritual gatherings, churches, sport.

My generation, aged 35–40, has shrunk to **6.8%** of Croatia's population. A country that had already lost far more people to demographic decline than to the war itself has yet to be replenished by immigration. The village and the coast are half-dead in winter. I am now a "lone wolf", an Observer and an heir — no longer in depression, but in a proud though sometimes startling position. I believe I am not alone in that; it is the fate of maturity, the convergence of all components up to this point. The other options are the lost members — of which I am partly one — and those who are transmitting their knowledge to the Alpha generation. To judge by my half-sister, the Alphas do not look lost either. It is quite possible that the Millennials, alongside the Boomers, will be the greatest victims of the transition between two centuries. Our grandparents created the preconditions of the chaos; the young are going their own way; we remain in the space between, without allies — but not "damaged and forgotten forever". We are paying our price, and we can still confirm our worth in this ontological opportunity: finally to close the bridge.

Many philosophers have recognised that the middle — and particularly the urban — class generally (even in the time of my grandfather) often struck a "*Faustian bargain*" with conformism, whether it wanted to, had to, or was simply being hypocritical. Without some "power" nothing can be achieved. But each person paying that price is also an instrument of other mechanisms. Every mechanism, in its human basis of thinking, both resembles others and — out of fear and self-knowledge — fights against those others who might marginalise it in return.

My career and my progress can at best be only intrinsic — the kind that touches human experience and knowledge as something universally useful. Universally useful today is also technology: the mobile phone, the internet, tools that are mostly free. What happened there? Is anyone to blame for my situation? That we shall analyse — but it is not the point. The **middle class**, especially its lower reaches, was and remains the trigger of an inexplicable discontent. Around 1930 that discontent took the form of the crisis of the "white-collar worker" — in Germany and throughout the world — and was adroitly manipulated into chaos. But the crisis itself was real. Those people, like me, worked honestly, studied, wore their shirt (sometimes the blue work shirt, sometimes the waiter's purple), did some student jobs; and nearly all of them ended up "*squeezed*" — as do some countries that are torn between the policy they want and the policy they can afford.

That part of the class — and the upper-middle that is falling into the lower, as I am — feels "*cheated*": everything it invested in, everything society invested in it, honestly if not without a hidden cost (time, membership fees, "great promises"), has become worthless the moment tempo and competitiveness were lost. The value of my past, of my degree, of my life, is now close to zero — objectively. That is not consolation, nor fuel for grievance — not for me, at least — but it remains a potential danger to *liberal democracy*, as it has always been. Few look at both sides of the coin; even **Marx** predicted the disappearance of the middle class or of capitalism — and both survived but remain in permanent crisis. The

convergence of proletariat and bourgeoisie was often obscured — as in the generation of my grandfather. Everyone ends up feeling they have lost their identity and that their future is uncertain. Most of my generation I encounter in the hospital waiting room. I now believe it will resolve itself into profound **self-transcendence or apathy** rather than radical movements — which we all know are equally "false". But apathy remains a sign of an "unhealthy society".

I want this work to show that society is not to blame, and that a change of order is not the solution — quite the reverse: that same order protects us, even if we are not aware of it. But that things have moved a little from what was expected — yes, they have. It is in the realm of *expectation* where we have a right to feel we have "lost" our dignity. Yet I can answer myself immediately:

- Only about 10% of those who graduate — and fewer than 5% of those who attempt to enrol — develop a genuine career in their field.
- Almost all of us simply, as my late brother-in-law the factory worker put it — *bought time*. We were not particularly diligent, often hypocritical. We also *lost time* in the Proustian sense — because the question on my faculty today is whether one should study for ten or twenty years; and if that is for market competitiveness rather than for oneself, it is hard to see how anyone who begins working at thirty, with a bar exam and years of practice still ahead and a family life besides, achieves any security at all.
- We wanted to enrol even as the 800th or the 1,000th on the list — knowing that was not the same starting position as everyone else, but not because of deep meritocracy in the system, or corruption, or fault on our part or our parents', or trends or the economy of the time: simply — the order is the order. I know colleagues who were 200th from 2,000 and never finished, but found their way by other means. I know I was lucky: after the entrance exam I climbed from 2,000th to 800th and celebrated with my grandfather as if it were a

feast day. I know I climbed further into the top 300 in my year by the end — already the top quarter, from the bottom quarter I began in. But I never could, and cannot, and do not wish to be in the top 5%. And already that makes all of this look like futile expense, lost time, and the bill that is now arriving — paid with state support or with parents' savings.

- We are almost deterministically lost — in our own freedom and in illusions that *at the time* were in fact correct: finish school, find a job, marry, and all will be well and the world will be at peace. Had there been no crises — we would have ended in the same place, but we refuse to admit it. There have always been more graduates than the labour market needed.

Therefore — man is a being of everything except "enlightenment about himself and reality". My mental difficulties did not drive me away from reality — they drove me fully into it. When I see identity under threat, when sporting events turn political, when great masses of people channel their energy into enormous concerts and subcultural (and largely apolitical) mass movements, I see a vast number of discontented members of the middle class. Many are on medication; many are looking for other countries or alternatives. Knowing that addiction is bad, they flee into faith, philosophy, writing, humanitarian work — none of which is wrong or shameful, and all of which enriches identity — but which conceals the truth of their upbringing and identity. The Millennial middle and lower-middle class was hit hardest by the crises from 2008 onward, yet had perhaps also lived very well. The cumulative bill — personal and social — has arrived.

Today the problem is no longer primarily economic. What drove every war — even the Second World War — was debated endlessly: economic collapse, or psychological necessity? Today, as always, the core problem is the sense of *alienation and non-belonging, of superfluity and uselessness*. It is not fertile ground for conspiracy theories or nihilism — simply a fact that it is no "accident" that tools like the mobile phone, AI, the internet, the car, have become practically free. The system knows they will disrupt

themselves (people are no longer needed at toll booths; bureaucracy is replaced by *e-Citizens*), yet also knows that a digital bread-and-circuses keeps people engaged and that adaptation will take long enough for the worst tensions to remain manageable. Most people fight with everything they have to accept both the necessity and the gift of the world; those most unable to follow are the ones who "cannot" psychologically keep up with change any longer — like my mother when she had to attend her ECDL course — or the bureaucrats who feel "disposable" in a system replacing them, perhaps taking away their job, salary, hope, and plan for a family. I found a certain salvation in *radical acceptance and resourcefulness* — not through manipulation but through permanent change in social progress and in the progress of the person; while they, because of greater needs or the belief that they have greater needs and do greater work for a smaller pension, remain long at the counter, and the future they face is harder still.

I wrote this first section only at the very end of writing the book, and saw that it is precisely in the "squeezed" layers that discontent is greater than at the very top or the very bottom. On the street I cannot find a true pauper or an unhappy poor man, nor a true rich man. The middle class is in tension with others — but primarily with itself — and that often reaches the breaking point of mental and physical illness.

AN ADDITIONAL EXAMPLE OF "STATE SUICIDE": THE HOMELAND WAR

There is today a surplus of old veterans. They are no longer "needed by the state". The register is in chaos. The system is overloaded. All that was offered to my father — a war and civilian invalid — was two weeks in a convalescent home in Ogulin. And yet one must ask for what people went to war, aside from duty. For the state? For ideals? For an old people's home? For generations who will both honour and not honour it — because the tooth of time is always the strongest? Why would anyone value another's sacrifices above their own? Both my father and **Janjić** did not kill

themselves nor try to, although my father mentioned it sometimes, and I even called the police to his house once. Poor man — lying in bed, he thought he would be taken to prison for it; though nervous, he was only wanting attention. I, as his person of trust, said then: "He need go neither to prison nor to hospital — his wish is to die at home. It is enough that there is a plan."

In the Homeland War some 10,000 soldiers died (plus civilians); after the war, 3,500 completed suicide. Accumulated stress, disappointment, ageing, illness, and the individual's own "fall" — combined with a mind fixed entirely on the war — produced that effect, rather than the recognition that the struggle of life truly never ends, and that war itself can confer certain values. It is a devastating result for a victorious nation. And consider: it is hard to believe that fewer acts of goodness, courage, humanity, or simple accident occurred in the war than of evil — but they are of far smaller visible effect. And that the solidarity in the cellars — shared with people of several nationalities — was stronger then than now, whatever version of the truth is more accurate.

Looking from outside: the paradox is that humanity creates the evil it then treats in hospital. Not all doctors acted by their oath; not all soldiers by an evil order. But what is yet more tragic: no one ever asks what became of the losers — especially in these countries. Their register does not exist; no one keeps it or wishes to. Their loss is double. Suicide is invisible — and certainly no smaller in total. Veterans already face double the average suicide risk; here we speak of those no one wishes to speak of, those who have no status, no number, no standing as human being or fighter or victim or defender. Setting aside those guilty of crimes or untroubled by conscience — we speak of ordinary recruits, ordinary people, who in surveys as early as 1992 and 1993 said they wanted some kind of peace as soon as possible. The tragedy is therefore double.

There is said to be a *Centre for Nonviolent Action* still operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina, funded from German and other contributions. Whatever its political and migratory interests, the money is fairly well

verified as not being "laundered" — though it amounts to only around half a million euros a year. But veterans from all sides who meet and see in each other a human being, a victim, a loser, may actually be saving lives and treating PTSD. How much is one life worth — and the family it grounds as either a foundation of community or a foundation of crisis? They see the other, and feel seen — as in the Christmas truce of the First World War. It is not something "popular"; and the mental state of such people is the modern archetype reserved for those "on the margins" or those "who earned it". Yet they actually carry an aura of authenticity, truth, and weakness without fear or hatred — much like the patients in the hospital. Not absolute — but a mirror image of the normal world. And war belongs to the normal world too.

RATES AND PROCESS OF SUICIDE — AND TO SOME DEGREE OF DEPRESSION

Many people are not bad to themselves and to others because they are morally indifferent, but often because of — moral burnout, and the feeling that justice must collect its debt sooner or later, rather than the recognition that life and goodness are their own purpose and their own victory. According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, around 500 people die by physical suicide each year in Croatia. That is a very small percentage — but someone is always caught in it, as in the rare diseases like my father's: because the odds for each of us, for everything, are equal. It does not always happen only to "other people". Attempts, however, are up to **20 times more** frequent. **Women attempt roughly three times more** than men but complete it less often and less severely. That surprised me — I had assumed depression was a male disease. I had spent more time on the male ward, I suppose.

Because I have heightened empathy and high nonverbal intelligence by the hospital test — everything else only slightly above average — clearly I lack the typical one-sided view of the world, in matters of gender included.

The denser mass in the prefrontal cortex is more typical of women, as are hormonal oscillations; hence their love, maternal empathy, but also sometimes the other side — suppression, or aggression — is "deeper". I regret having once been on that "path", but I am no longer their adversary. I actually prefer depth to superficiality, whether it comes from my sex or the other. Misogynistic jokes are common to both sexes, as is the general undervaluing of partners and taking everything for granted.

What I was left with, or left behind — being alone, being left — actually taught me to value more. Not only from a sense of dependence, but because it is always different when something can be lost, not had, and regained. Although we men think it is harder for us to secure a future, often the reverse is true: women too remain in a vacuum or trapped — those women who are not activists. That draws them towards depression and suicidality; because amongst both sexes there are ambiverts or "psychologically atypical" people like me who can understand one another, but who are in a minority.

My wife has for many years been diagnosed with schizophrenia and kleptomania — which in itself sounds repellent — but in our love she never expressed or manifested it, nor defied me when I asked her not to cause harm. She still takes her syrup after her injections; yet to me she seems a completely healthy person, even when she has gone months without it. She is also — at least in my direct experience — attractive and hard-working, yet lonely for years, which led her at times to the "wrong" places. She has fewer grey hairs than I do — she is of a mild and patient character. For her it was "too much" to wait nearly half a century for marriage, working various jobs and living mostly with ill parents and a mother who developed psychological problems due to diabetes. Wherever and however we are born, we all have two sides of the coin. Here again only *empiria* holds.

My work in the ice-cream factory or at McDonald's taught me more about teamwork and hard labour than my sense of superiority let on when I was buying sandwiches and irritated about how long it took. When my wives praised me — whether they later retracted it or not — I saw that they

were not lying. That so little was actually needed; that they saw in me enormous potential, perhaps even more than the realistic picture warranted — which becomes a problem of idealisation. I am therefore a proponent of voluntarism as the key in psychology, and of that "lucky" finding of a kindred soul — not through conquest and forced bravery, but through patient, active growth and faith that even the "unpopular" like me can, through God's or some other providence, achieve love and lasting relationships.

I was always asked when my first illness "struck". It did not "strike". I also **DECIDED** that it could strike, begin, or I created it — or had been carrying it. No matter. My first question was: "Do psychological illnesses even exist?" What is a disorder — what is a diagnosis — what is a classification that changes every few years, from suicidality to homosexuality to transgender identity and beyond? People know little and think they know much, forming incomplete views.

In 2010 I had a natural *possessiveness* — I wanted to "possess" love, sex, friendship, to "have" a girlfriend. Not entirely wrong or unrealistic — but excessive, without faith, patience, or the wisdom that everything in life resolved itself and would resolve this too. In front of a former girlfriend I once "cut" myself precisely to show that the weight of guilt towards my environment made no sense. I was glad that she felt something and was ambivalent about her former partner — as she later was towards me — but her instability and nervous energy horrified me. And she held that against me — in court! The immaturity was mutual, but the love was genuine and not only romantic. I often had the sense of *inferiority and superiority* as a counterbalance — something psychologists have compared in various ways. I had a complex of invisibility, a youthful wish for fame, a feeling of the injustice of society and of women towards my honest and natural intentions. And of course I felt that effort had become unrewarding for the first time — that I therefore could not have what I wanted: freedom, satisfaction, exams passed, a girlfriend, company. All that had represented

the expected reward after long months of waiting and monotonous trips to the library.

I always thought life was a film; then I began to doubt it, and felt shame before family and society — though the pressure on my obligations was not heavy. I only needed to "wait" a few months. The mother of my half-sister — who often quarrelled with my mother, my father, and me, and who had herself been psychiatrically hospitalised due to a "sense of injustice", though highly intelligent and a criminologist — got herself re-employed at a senior position at the age of fifty. She suggested I go to the Student Catholic Centre. I thought she was being hypocritical; but she simply also expected a different life, though I see that the compatibility of couples is often an illusion. At first I thought I had "missed the train" because I had not felt like going to SKAC in spring — and then I went in autumn and experienced some of the most beautiful months and years of young love, friendship, shared successes and hopes, with **Mihaela**. We kept putting off marriage and children — a particular story of the modern age — though we did not "fall biologically behind". Other things and other hopes separated us; the wedding, when it came, suffered from the stress of the form rather than the content.

"DURATION" OF SUICIDES

In the second phase — 2020 — I had fulfilled desires. But I had committed the "suicide" of my workplace and, in part, of a second course of study. I felt useless, a failure as a man; I devoted myself only to faith and stayed at home while my wife worked — which gave that sense of natural and sexual uselessness despite alternatives. Our joint family farm (*OPG*) was at its end; serious illnesses had begun: first her father's, then our dog's and cat's, and later her brother's — with whom I had both a good relationship and conflicts. I do not know why he died so young, at thirty — I know he was "unstable", unhappy, deeply lonely, though apparently industrious and physically strong, drawn to exercise and to faith but also to certain

alternatives. He died in — a bed; reportedly fell asleep at noon and did not wake. Such things also admit of different interpretations.

What I actually wanted was to be a better husband, to become a father (we went through tests), to be useful and to contribute financially. But contemplation kept pulling me, along with job changes, a religious fatalism into which I had fallen ("absolute guilt and duty before God"), and a pull back to my neighbourhood from Jarun where we lived near the church of *Sveta Mati Slobode* (Holy Mother of Freedom). I would cycle food to my grandmother, visit her parents less and less willingly, while she went more and more often. I sought projects and ideas for work at the coast, though I had planned to return and work again outside my profession in painting jobs for a pleasant employer — or with my father, who had just retired. And all the more after one of the greater life shocks: separation — and the final confirmation that I had been "left" and found "worthless". For a long time I kept reviewing causes and amplifying memories and love for my first wife. This is both normal grief and "clinical" — but in my case everything lasts a relatively short time. For that reason too I do not fit any typical "profile".

My father supported me in the hardest moments; but the long conversations also exhausted him, and he began to move into verbal aggression, showing a worse side and his traumas. The hardest thing for me was the thought that I was to blame for my own incapacity — that neither my wife valued me, nor her family and friends, nor I myself. And for a long time I did not learn the real reason she left and filed a report against me — which was precisely before my planned return from the coast and the first fitting-out of the house. Despite the accumulation of reasons, that was proof that I was not without a plan; though that plan might not always have been in one place. I knew her motives approximately and had in fact been trying to fulfil them in time. I thought the problem was even in my "impurity" — and also in the injustice of the system: one never has quite enough qualifications and exams. Though I had grown overweight from sitting for a time, developed varicose veins, a hernia, and the rest. My

grandfather had long wanted me to go to a psychiatrist; my father had not allowed it.

There had always been pauses of five to ten years in which, apart from some minor incidents, I had had no clinical phases. This relativity of conditions, decisions, biology, and social pressure makes everything more questionable and complex. A human life is complicated in its simple needs and cannot be reduced to a simple equation. And love, in the end, either exists or does not in almost any tolerable situation — it is not simply a ledger of obligations. Difficulties cannot last forever. But then came the Pandemic and the earthquake, and it seemed that there was no end to the troubles. As I will see in the examples of others, so I saw in myself: the process of "deterioration" to concrete plans, or to the cry for help and culmination of depression or suicidality, is at minimum one to three years — during which neither the person nor anyone else sees or knows whether real help is needed. Equally, however, recovery is quite possible within two years from anything. My phases were mostly acute and seasonal — especially in winter, due to the darkness and conditions that have genetically never suited me as a Dalmatian living in Zagreb.

Despite it being neither consoling nor a competition that no sex is immune to depression in the wider sense — my personal assumptions are on average confirmed. Although men externalise emotions more easily, in wrong places and ways, the process everywhere is long. My planning would never have been known had it not ended institutionally — I never reached the means I had planned. *Ideation* is said to last **one to two years** as a threshold. From silent it moves to active, and then to a sudden decision that can come within **ten minutes** of the act — in nearly half the cases when people say that day: "I'm going." This sets aside accidental suicides (falls) and legal combinations of drugs — as in the case of, say, Heath Ledger — or addictions as escape, like Whitney Houston. There are several further distinctions:

► **Ambivalence** between the biological drive to survive — *biophilia* — and the desire for death, for the end of this life or of the pain, is not a brief

process and cannot be predicted to break in a younger person. In older people, as we shall see, prediction is easier. It takes time for the organism's impulse towards *thanatophilia* to dull itself — through the attraction of something new, rebellious, even self-righteous, or logically consequent for a world into which we did not choose to be born but were "*thrown into freedom, life, and the game*". We often react with irritation — because we were not originally like this.

► **Loss of fear** of death — which I also observed in quiet killers, ordinary people, and the arrogant — is, according to **Joiner**, acquired rather than innate in the context of suicide. This is the process of habituation and dissociation, of the "tunnel-vision" of solution, and of surmounting the barrier of pain — however extreme, as in throwing oneself under a train. On the other side, failed attempts carry through life the stigma of being a walking failure in both worlds.

► **The brain in survival mode** thinks it is choosing the lesser evil — it is working in reverse, striving to shut down the prefrontal lobe.

► **Regret** comes after the leap — above all from bridges like the Golden Gate, where every survivor has said that regret came in mid-air and that this was in fact the only mistake — or very nearly became so. Before the fall, awareness returns: the biological drive, the "firing" of the amygdala, the sense of reality and fear of the unknown against the known pains and delusions.

► **Letters** are written by only about a third; yet as I said at my admission — nearly **80%** of people announce the act in some way, according to similarly old WHO and HZJZ or CDC data. The question is always: how many are only wanting attention — as, in fact, I too was wanting to be "noticed".

► **General prevention** is useful even through the rigidity of the system and locked doors one cannot leave without permission — even if one has to perform recovery or only to wish it. Although many return to hospital — which I did not want, except as outpatient — **70%** of people after hospitalisation do not return to attempts.

► Although I do not know whether I would have continued on that path, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), roughly **7 announcements** are matched by only **1 actual attempt**. Diverting attention is always risky — as with any threat — for the overloading of the system, especially intensive and emergency units. But so is ignoring the danger.

"DANGEROUS" YEARS

My logic and experience are also borne out by the percentages. The majority of first episodes occur before the age of **30**. A second may follow. A third — or a first again — comes in later life, when the majority are not depressive but have other problems: dementia, a sense of not being understood, a slowness that does not in fact arrive quickly. The middle years are the hardest, but also the firmest. For me, depression has now been replaced by anxiety. A smaller but significant proportion — around a *third* — maintain a long-term clinical picture. I met in the waiting room a talkative, courteous, and intelligent patient, a little older than me. He had studied architecture and says he has been in treatment for nearly twenty years. His hair is slightly unkempt, but he radiates neither negativity nor neglect nor the "zombie effect". I did not want to tell him he is probably in the phase of **(self-)learned helplessness** — if not of dependence. Although he says they changed his medication twenty times, that speaks both ways: the system is trying, and individuals and organisms resist treatment unequally. Drugs are not ideal or sufficient. On the other hand, his will to pause without a fight, to stay on one drug, to try to "pull himself together" or to live without it, has collapsed. Perhaps by now it is too late — which we discuss in the next chapter. **45-65** are surprisingly dangerous (middle) ages.

The scars of depression persist into later life; in old age most become recidivists, and this can be the precursor to neurological physical deterioration. Those trained in an optimistic approach tend to remain so — but neither the old nor their carers are equally positive in spirit, and age is

not the determining factor, though it does help in masking character more easily. *Neuroplasticity* operates in *post-traumatic growth* as well as damage, and in the capitalisation of experience: "*What does not kill you strengthens you*". More precisely: it is a redirection — **sublimation** — into another activity and a different consciousness, and in time into the unconscious. Even with anxiety I became convinced that it is genuinely at times a neurological and unconscious threat, primarily physical but only symptomatic. Yet the hardest — and the easiest — thing is to live *in spite of anxiety, not without it*. To live *in mild anxiety and speed for the sake of prediction* — not in the *self-destructive* mode that *distress* drives one towards. That is healthy — just as hedonism on the other side often leads to "sleepiness" and a slowing of metabolism, and even of cellular and circulatory speed. But it too must not be excluded as therapy and as a lesser evil. Evil is evil — but a lesser evil for good is good.

THE LEGAL PROBLEM OF SUICIDE

and of related questions that laws prefer to forget

I. SUICIDE BETWEEN SOVEREIGNTY AND FREEDOM: A PARADOX THAT ENDURES

Suicide has long ceased to be a criminal offence. That sentence sounds simple — but behind it lie several centuries of normative overturning: from the criminal prosecution of a corpse and the confiscation of a family's property in old English and continental law, all the way to modern decriminalisation, which is less an ideological capitulation than a pragmatic impossibility of punishing someone who is no longer there. Once, only the sovereign held the right over life and death. Today, ostensibly, the individual is left to decide. But the net is mutual and almost equally dense — it simply no longer tears along the seams of force; it tears along the seams of procedure.

No one is compelled to kill himself — and in that we are far from Nazi Germany. But it is worth recalling that that system too began with apparently mild measures: registers, categorisations, paperwork. The logic of normative labelling — determining who is and who is not "worthy of protection" — is not the privilege of totalitarian regimes; it is the quiet constant of every legal order that boldly calls itself liberal while simultaneously determining who may exercise which right under which conditions.

Liberalism today moves in two directions at once. Capital punishment is abolished; elections become formally freer; capitalism celebrates personal autonomy — yet everywhere new grey zones spring up, new restrictions, new places where laws exist but systems do not function. The right to a dignified death looks like progress — until you try to exercise it.

I see these same patterns in related taboo subjects — prostitution, divorce, abortion, gambling — where law often exists as form without content, where the grey zone is not the exception but the rule, and where every attempt at serious debate drowns in ideological noise. In Aristotelian terms: ignorance of the future and an incomplete picture produce the same wrong decisions — not only in those who choose, but in those who write the laws.

II. THE "RIGHT TO DIE" THAT DOES NOT EXIST: CROATIA, SWITZERLAND, AND THE SPACE BETWEEN

Assisted suicide in Croatia is, pursuant to the reforms of the Criminal Code of 2011 and subsequent amendments, considerably decriminalised — at least as regards helping a person who genuinely wishes to die, without a base motive.¹ The conditions are: free and serious will, and the absence of material, psychological, or emotional pressures that would compromise that will. The only remaining criminal obstacle is where assisted suicide is carried out from a base motive — hatred, material gain, or psychological domination.

On paper, this is almost the most liberal approach in the region. In practice it is — nothing. There is no morphine that a physician may easily prescribe. There is no palliative care available to all: there is one mobile hospice team, a few hospital wards, and the Dom Marije Kažotić near Rijeka — which records nearly ninety per cent patient satisfaction — but with waiting lists that defeat any idea of a dignified death. Admission is possible only in the final three weeks of life, and those three weeks are sometimes impossible to determine in advance.

Switzerland is the other pole: *Dignitas* and *Pegasos* as private organisations carry out assisted suicide, including for foreign nationals. But

¹Croatian Criminal Code (*Kazneni zakon*), Art. 114 — assisted suicide decriminalised (where no base motive) in the 2011 reform, further consolidated 2013. Source: zakon.hr (accessed 11 May 2026).

even there controversies exist: gas methods in which problems of suffocation have been established, questions of documentation, and questions of who may request such a service from another country without exposing intermediaries to criminal prosecution in their home state. The European courts have confirmed that assisted suicide cannot be demanded from the State, but that different national regulations may be a legitimate expression of subsidiarity.² Even in Germany — where the Federal Constitutional Court in 2020 confirmed the right to a self-determined death for any reason — police and ambulance services still operate on the presumption that a concrete attempt is a crisis incident requiring intervention, which shows how vast the chasm between law and practice can be.

III. CONFLICT OF NORMS: WHEN THE STATE IS SIMULTANEOUSLY OBLIGED AND PROHIBITED

Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to life. Strasbourg case-law has long clarified that this does not mean an obligation to force a person to live at any cost — but nor does it mean a right to demand State assistance in dying. A person has the right to refuse treatment — protected in Croatia by the Act on the Protection of Patients' Rights, which clearly states that every competent adult may say "no" to any therapy, even where that means certain death.³ A physician who treats such a person by force commits a criminal offence.

²ECtHR: *Haas v. Switzerland* (2011); *Koch v. Germany* (2012); *Pretty v. United Kingdom* (2002). The Court has consistently held that Art. 2 ECHR does not confer a right to die with State assistance, but that varying national regulations may represent a legitimate exercise of the margin of appreciation. Source: hudoc.echr.coe.int.

³Act on the Protection of Patients' Rights (*Zakon o zaštiti prava pacijenata*), NN 169/2004, 37/2008 — Art. 16 et seq.: every competent adult may refuse any treatment, including life-sustaining treatment. A physician who overrides that refusal commits the criminal offence of coercion.

Here arises the conflict of norms that laws prefer to leave unresolved. The same person who may refuse chemotherapy in writing cannot obtain coordinated assistance in dying. The form and content are identical — the only difference is whether the will towards death is expressed passively or actively. The moment someone explicitly says they wish to die — psychiatric assessment arrives, possible hospitalisation, the logic of "when in doubt, choose life".

Here lies the philosophical paradox that the system dislikes acknowledging. There is a circular logic — a Catch-22 — by which every request for death is pre-emptively discredited: if you are rational, why would you kill yourself? And if you want to kill yourself, you are evidently not rational. This is not always hypocrisy — sometimes it is a genuine legal tension between two equally legitimate interests. But the tension is unresolved, and it is the most vulnerable who pay.

I personally conducted a battle over medication prescriptions, drug interactions, and what was called "good intentions" — which, in advanced cases, unfortunately end in court when it is already too late. I agreed to passive euthanasia — the refusal of aggressive colonoscopy, intravenous drips, and the rest in an advanced phase — and this is consistent with European, Croatian, and Church or moral law. I thanked everyone, because I understand that physicians must develop a kind of habituation when working with so many patients. But that habituation too has its price.

IV. MENTAL ILLNESS, TIMING, AND THE CONFLICT OF PAST AND PRESENT SELF

One of the hardest questions that contemporary law has not resolved: can a person with depression, chronic psychological pain, or a degenerative neurological illness make a valid decision about their own death?

Systems that permit euthanasia strictly distinguish a rational desire for death from suicidality as a symptom of illness. Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain require that the decision be voluntary, considered, and repeated,

confirmed by at least two independent physicians. Yet even in those systems, 30 to 50 per cent of requests are refused because physicians suspect the wish for death is only "a cry for help" rather than genuine will.

In law, this problem is called the conflict of past and present self. Is the person who signed a euthanasia request ten years ago, when fully conscious, the same one who today sits quietly in a care home enjoying the sun — though she no longer recognises anyone? The system has no answer. An advance directive is valid — but in practice the rule is followed of stopping the process if the patient shows any resistance or agitation, even if that resistance is merely a biological reflex rather than a conscious change of will.

The Dutch case of 2016 is a vivid example.⁴ A physician administered a sedative in the coffee of a 74-year-old woman with advanced dementia who had earlier signed a request for euthanasia "instead of going into a home" — without the woman's knowledge — and then, while the woman physically resisted, carried out the euthanasia with the family's assistance. It was the first prosecution of a physician for murder due to breach of euthanasia protocol in the history of the Netherlands. The Supreme Court's judgment in 2020 acquitted the physician because the patient had clear written documentation and her movements were interpreted as reflexes, not conscious resistance. The case produced stricter rules: sedatives may no longer be administered covertly in food or drink; a living will must specify symptoms in detail; and many physicians state they would never carry out euthanasia on a physically struggling person, regardless of any paper.

The difficulty with that case — in which everyone acted in good faith — is that it shows how the biological resistance to death overrides rational will, even when that will was clearly and freely expressed. The law can write

⁴Dutch "coffee case" 2016: RTG Den Haag, 2019; Supreme Court of the Netherlands (*Hoge Raad*), HR 21 April 2020, ECLI:NL:HR:2020:712. The Court acquitted the physician, holding that the patient's written advance directive was valid and that her physical resistance was reflex, not a conscious change of will. The case produced stricter rules: sedatives may no longer be administered covertly, and advance directives must specify expected symptoms in detail. Source: euthanasiecommissie.nl.

a rule, but it cannot erase the fear of death built into human nature. That is why euthanasia laws are restrictive even where they are liberal: the State fears that in attempting to respect freedom it will end up killing someone who changed their mind at the last moment but could not express it.

The second case that divided public opinion was that of the young Dutch woman **Noa Pothoven**. She did not receive euthanasia through the formal system; she refused food and water and died with palliative care at home — with the consent of her physicians and family. She was twenty-nine years old. She suffered from severe depression and PTSD as a consequence of childhood abuse. The system judged that her condition could still improve with treatment — but she refused further attempts. Public opinion was divided; even her boyfriend supported her. That case opens the question that no law has resolved: who has the final word?

V. CROATIA: THE PARADOX OF THE MOST LIBERAL LAW WITHOUT A SYSTEM

Croatia has one of the legally most liberal European approaches to assisted suicide — and one of the least functional systems that could actually carry it out. Decriminalisation exists. The system does not. There are no institutions, no drugs, no trained personnel, no procedure.

In Croatia, every suicide attempt still enters the medical record as an acute psychiatric incident — regardless of whether it was initiated by a terminally ill person with clear will or by a young person in acute crisis. Every attempt is grounds for involuntary hospitalisation, psychiatric assessment, and medical intervention. The absurdity: whilst in Germany or Austria this tension was the subject of constitutional battles, in Croatia the same provision passed "under the radar". We have decriminalisation of assistance — we do not have a system to implement it. The person is in a legal vacuum.

Awareness is the key here. Jesus himself spoke of ignorance; intolerance when we must suffer something but tolerate it when we inflict it on others;

and above all — the taboo surrounding everything, including death. The grey zone that simultaneously prevents both the right to life and the right to a dignified death is a greater evil than clear rules with which one might disagree. If something exists — and it does — let it be transparent; let it have a framework; let a person be able to make a decision with a clear conscience and full information.

VI. BIOLOGICAL RESISTANCE, TIMING, AND THE INCOMPLETE PICTURE

It is worth distinguishing certainty from ontological confusion. Death is certain — but is the biological resistance to it proof that death is not even natural to the conscience, that it ought not to be accelerated? Perhaps that very resistance — which persists even where reason says death would be better — is a signal of something that neither the medical nor the legal category fully captures.

A friend told me of his father who, due to throat cancer, wanted euthanasia. He was decided, exhausted, saw only darkness. And then he returned to Croatia, resumed renovating his apartment and house, found meaning in daily life. Neither he nor his family — all Christians, all wanting to support him in whatever choice — ever heard him speak of it again. He died naturally, surrounded by those who loved him. That example does not prove that euthanasia is unjustified — it proves that timing is decisive, and that we ourselves, in our hardest moments, do not see the full picture: neither meaningful on this side, nor on the other. I have seen much of that future from my own crises — and I know that an incomplete picture can be lethal.

There is a dimension that must not be skipped. Jesus at the cross refused the vinegar — the drink that would have dulled the pain. Theologians interpret this variously: as conscious acceptance of suffering, as a theodical gesture, as full presence in the moment. Masochism and the redemption of sins I explicitly do not regard as a relevant frame — but psychologically,

value-wise, and ontologically, the gesture says something important: there is a difference between pain that has meaning and pain that does not, and that difference is not always visible from outside.

A priest once told me something I accepted as plain common sense: "We will all come to our turn there at *Grbolje* — there is no need to hurry." It was not coldness. It was a perspective that places death in a natural frame, not a catastrophic one. People have died in harder conditions throughout history, often without any relief, accepting death without dramatisation. Our problem perhaps begins earlier — with suicidality as a phenomenon that is today structurally different from anything before. Fewer wars, more isolation. Less physical pain, more existential emptiness. A system that responds with criminal law and psychiatric protocols instead of community, meaning, and accessible support — is choosing the wrong tool.

Divorces, internal conflicts, and external pressures do not operate separately: inner fragmentation often leads to outwardly chaotic decisions, whilst the endless external disputes — legal, familial, social — strike back and deepen the inner instability.

VII. PALLIATIVE CARE AS THE THIRD WAY

There is a third way that is too rarely mentioned: palliative care that neither accelerates death nor postpones it — that frees from pain and makes a dignified departure possible. In Croatia this care is fragmented, underfunded, and bureaucratically constrained. The Dom Marije Kažotić near Rijeka is an example of good practice — but an exception that confirms the rule.

Passive euthanasia — allowing aggressive treatment to lapse in an advanced phase — is legal and ethically acceptable in the European, Croatian, and Church or moral legal framework. But it is not systematically available: there are no clear protocols, no protection for the physician, no education. Physicians fear prescribing high doses of analgesics because it may expose them to accusations of accelerating the process — and that

fear, in an environment without clear guidelines, cannot be dismissed as mere caution.

I personally conducted a battle over medication prescriptions for a close family member, and I know what it means to navigate a system unprepared for such decisions — yet which has willing people trying to do the right thing. I thanked everyone — because those who work with so many patients must develop habituation merely to be able to keep working. But gratitude is not the same as consent to an unprepared system.

VIII. THE GREY ZONE AS A SYSTEMIC PROBLEM

The parallel between the legal treatment of suicide and related taboo subjects is not accidental. Prostitution in Croatia is not a criminal offence — but it is also not organised, regulated, or protected. There is administrative liability for disturbing public order and peace; there is the criminal offence of procuring; there is a pile of grey zones. The line between autonomously providing a sexual service and the criminal offence of procuring — thin in law, inconsistently applied in practice.

The European Court of Human Rights endorsed the French Nordic model in 2024 — criminalising buyers, not workers — concluding that punishing buyers is not a violation of the right to privacy because the State has a legitimate aim of suppressing exploitation.⁵ On the other hand, the Court of Justice of the European Union, in a different context, recognised sexual services as an economic activity. Two European courts, the same continent, opposite logics.

⁵ECtHR, *M.A. and Others v. France* (2024) — endorsing the Nordic model (criminalising buyers, not sellers) as a legitimate aim. Cf. German Federal Constitutional Court (*Bundesverfassungsgericht*), BVerfG 2 BvR 2347/15, judgment of 26 February 2020: the right to a self-determined death — including by suicide — is protected under the general right of personality (Art. 2(1) GG) and may not be conditioned on a terminal prognosis. ECtHR, *M.L. v. Poland* (2023): where a State legalises abortion, it incurs a positive obligation to ensure real, not merely theoretical, access — and conscientious objection by one physician may not block the entire system.

The same logic runs through all these subjects: law exists but is not enforced, or is enforced selectively, or there simply is no infrastructure to make it real. And each time the small person living in the grey zone pays the highest price — not because they are bad, but because the system has not decided what it wants to be. Awareness and transparency — not as an ideological compromise, but as the minimal precondition for a free and responsible decision — are the only thing that gives any of these subjects meaning.

The paradox becomes still more visible when three subjects are compared: abortion, dignified death, and prostitution. The ECtHR has not held that the Convention guarantees a right to abortion as such — but in *M.L. v. Poland* (2023) it confirmed that if a State legalises abortion it incurs a positive obligation to ensure actual, not merely theoretical, access to that service, and that the conscientious objection of an individual physician may not block the entire system. Similarly for dignified death: there is no Convention right to it — but refusal of treatment is protected, and a grey zone without procedure is a violation of dignity. For prostitution, the Court actively defends the State's right to suppress it — through the Nordic model confirmed in 2024. The result is paradoxical: of the three socially and morally controversial subjects, only for prostitution does there exist a clear, developed, and consistently applied European legal logic — even if in the direction of suppression. For abortion and dignified death: subsidiarity, margin of appreciation, and grey zone. As if the system finds it easier to regulate the body while it is alive than to ensure it dignity on the way out.

IX. STATISTICS AS MORAL INDICTMENT

Nearly a million people kill themselves in the world each year. Anxiety and depression are growing as global trends. Birth rates are falling. Emigration continues. Care homes are full, expensive, and — according to available research and inspectorate findings — often legally problematic. These figures are not neutral data. They are an indictment.

Not of any one law in isolation — but of the whole of a system that declares itself for the value of life yet is not prepared to invest in making that life bearable. The old sense of honour is giving way to trends of individuality. The motives for suicide today are structurally different from those of a hundred years ago. A system that responds with criminal law and psychiatric protocols instead of community, meaning, and accessible support — is choosing the wrong tool.

X. CONCLUSION: WRITE YOUR WILLS — AND NOT ONLY THE FORMAL ONES

There is one practical thing that can be drawn from all of this. Regardless of philosophical, theological, or legal positions — advance directives and anticipated treatment decisions matter. While you are healthy, while you are yourself, while you can — write them. Write what you do not want. Write what is acceptable. Write who you trust to make decisions in your name. This is instruction — even if you change it — because we never know the full truth to the end. And life is genuinely a presumption.

To all of us — to those who will one day be in a position of decision, and to those who will sit by the bed — it should be clear what the system is prepared to offer, what it is not, and why. Awareness is not a luxury. The grey zone that simultaneously prevents both the right to life and the right to a dignified death is a greater evil than clear rules with which you might disagree. This is neither for nor against euthanasia. It is for clarity. Where clarity is absent — the most vulnerable pay. Always.

Time is both subjective and objective — we will explain that later — and it is the place of "encounter", and the measure of everything. In every respect — the final hour, recovery from it, and everything that comes in between — it depends on whether someone has a piece of paper that says what you wanted. A question of the heart, as much as a question of bureaucracy — always. Psychiatry even recognizes (a will to?) living priority.

CHAPTER II: GENERAL AND LAY PSYCHOLOGY

INSIDE AND OUTSIDE — AND THE HARD STATISTICS

The literature on suicide is not long and in waiting. The topic of our fundamental relationship to life and death — and to *suicidality and self-determination* in particular — remains under-supplied, caught between isolated specialist questions and taboo. Every discipline, including my own, claims a monopoly on knowledge; yet we all began only as "students" and only at the end do we see that learning is just beginning. Today interdisciplinarity is necessary, but it risks collapsing into another vague subspecialty — or else into mere wide-ranging talk. The positive kind of breadth — choosing which sources and which connections matter for uncovering truth — is what is lacking.

Science and art are not a sport in which a good amateur can never be better than a poor professional. Professionals in any field can fail if they have no ear for it, or if they handle terms without content, or if the content flies outside precise form. The concepts of anxiety, suicidality, and depression are separately researched and defined. But in my own case moods, diagnoses, and symptoms were precisely mixed — and I want to bring that experience under a common denominator, not to deny that different types exist. I see it as a *connected process*. Rather than methodological wrestling, I want to inform at a level that — despite my non-professional standing — goes far beyond "guessing from a portal" and quack medicine.

The goal is not to diminish the question of suicidality, but to draw attention to a very widespread phenomenon — and simultaneously to separate the idea, the diagnosis, and the medication from the *ontological lie* that suicide represents, to which I refer the reader to the philosophical chapter. Every specialist should have an interdisciplinary education — that is what is missing in our curricula, arriving only in fragments. It is not about accumulating degrees. I formally completed one and a half faculties; my

grandfather two and a half; my father worked professionally in three disciplines and won state prizes in each. Yet it is a shame how little we all read, know, and connect when it comes to existential questions rather than curriculum points. Whilst the saying goes "a healthy body a healthy mind", and others question that — my thesis is actually the *reverse*. I regard spirit as the driver and will — though will is sometimes attributed also to soul, psyche, or reason.

The suicidal question looks too deep and multi-dimensional to be approached only with assumptions, guesswork, or pretentious analyses without firm conclusions. But precisely because much depends on personal conviction and experience, and because the literature is not plentiful whilst facts are multiplying, one can form a view only when one meets that intangible yet daily reality which permeates far more spheres of life and society than expected. I will not enter the history of social or religious attitudes to the phenomenon.

What interests me is a double perspective — scientific before humanistic or logical speculation — and specifically authors who, as I have been, were on both sides of the lectern: psychiatrists who were also **patients**, who accepted and treated — or sometimes did not — patients like themselves. They provide the "double insight" for a genuine synthesis rather than a mere unmasking of the truth.

"A CALL FOR HELP"

When I was in crisis, it never occurred to me to call a helpline. I later discovered a "hot line" that for me functions as a simple pressure valve for psychological, communicative, and imaginative needs — even in marriage. But in 2020 I did not know that crisis lines for suicidal states existed, even though I had a smartphone — which I had not yet "thrown away" and exchanged for a simpler phone for a period. I had heard of **Plavi telefon** — the Blue Telephone — but thought it was for children. That is the problem. Many people do not know, or lack the energy, will, or the pride to call,

especially when they know that communications are often cold and transactional in today's world — which is fine if the context is purely business. I did not know whom to turn to besides private individuals.

Plavi telefon in Croatia does not exclude such cases, and staff are trained for warmth and for graduated conversation.⁶ Calls can last 15 to 45 minutes — genuinely substantial, and perhaps sufficient for each person's civilisational or personal conscience in a crisis moment. The first pressure valve is also the most important, alongside the decision to seek help. It may occasionally, though rarely, become a "habit" — which is why human shame is even a healthy trait. The services mentioned — **Centar za krizna stanja, Udruga Životna linija, Let**, and others — despite a necessary habituation, know both responsibility and pride in helping. Intervention can prevent the immediate act in up to 80% of calls, and may multiply the probability of the person reconsidering by up to tenfold. If there is no open threat and no insistence on location, emergency and police services are not immediately dispatched — which builds trust but also carries the risk of non-concreteness and lost time.

There are also many volunteers, and the very act of calling creates an effect in the caller. A recommendation for a therapist is already harder and less effective — reportedly reaching perhaps 50%. Some organisations have the "good fortune" of being little known, so demand does not overwhelm quality. The logotherapy association — which works with Frankl's methods — was unknown to me, as was Frankl himself at that time. Today the internet and AI can genuinely help locate the relevant thing, after which one can check directly on a website or by telephone. The services **TESE**,

⁶Plavi telefon (Blue Telephone) is a Croatian crisis and counselling helpline, not restricted to youth despite its name and origin. Call-centre staff are trained in empathic listening and in safe messaging guidelines on suicide. Conversations typically last 15–45 minutes. According to available data consistent with WHO and CDC findings, crisis line intervention reduces immediate risk in approximately 80% of calls and may increase the probability that a caller reconsiders by up to tenfold. The line does not automatically dispatch emergency services unless there is a concrete and identified threat. Other Croatian services referenced: Centar za krizna stanja, Udruga Životna linija, Let, TESE, Centar za mlade, Sigurne kuće.

Centar za mlade, and **Sigurne kuće** exist — though they tend to appear in media through news and reportage rather than long-form film. Some organisations, despite support from the City of Zagreb, have even staged protests because the Ministry of Health declined funding for programmes they consider key. Long-term plans remain uncertain — not everyone has the luck of a wonderful partner, attentive parents, a few friends, and a flexible and talented psychiatrist. But had I known, why would I not have talked with someone for half an hour? Acute states are dangerous and common.

My professor apologised to me for having, without my knowledge, called the police, my wife, and the emergency services. I in turn felt the need to explain to him that he had done nothing wrong — on the contrary, he had turned my life for the better. Not for medical details, which are always in dispute, but because of the experience with people, society, rights, and myself which placed me in a situation where I value freedom and life, and see that it is no shame — but in fact a justified immunity within which I can develop my life well, doing what I love and want, whilst law and practice offer many possibilities that are for us to use.

A VOICE FROM INSIDE

Kay Redfield Jamison and **Linda Gask** wrote both expert and autobiographical books in which they gave voice to their own experiences and those of their patients.⁷⁸ We have all too often thought that the process of falling into a problem, a disorder, or death is something that happens

⁷Kay Redfield **Jamison**, *Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide* (Knopf, 1999). Jamison — herself a sufferer of bipolar disorder who survived a suicide attempt — argues that suicidality in its acute form is primarily a biological illness and that love, whilst necessary, is not sufficient; medication and psychotherapy are required. Her claim that "the night falls fast" refers to the speed of the acute terminal phase, though she is at pains to show that the path there is long.

⁸Ibid. and later more on this

suddenly — it is not. The process is long and painful, and is best seen from the inside; but it also gives insight into an extraordinary sequence of steps that can be surveyed in retrospect and even into infinity. That insight can allow the assessment of preventive methods, or of the mistakes that lead to the phase where the situation is either over or managed only through the "crisis" or "symptomatic" approach to which the clinical world is oriented — which is partly justified, since we are ultimately masters of our own lives regardless of the network we are caught in. Mental illnesses are the longest to treat, or are never treated — as with death — but the steps are in fact many, cumulative, invisible, and small, leading to a large and irreversible state. Their books are not even translated into Croatian. They reveal much — and also little. What matters is that they come from the Anglo-Saxon world, which differs from our continental and European law and philosophical, theological, and psychological tradition. But since the problems are universal, and are discussed only through films like **Miloš Forman's** cult - *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, it is worth seeing the overlaps.

Redfield titled her book on how the night falls fast, though twilight actually descends for a long time. Losses of "hope" begin small and gradual, prolonged or in phases — visible from the lives, letters, and testimonies of people. By the time the fatal moments arrive — of atrophy, apathy, or active self-aggression — what was decisions or small "regrets" has turned into a *state*. When the brain is in what we might call a habituated, trained, and prolonged crisis — *accumulation, amortisation, and contamination* from all sides — it no longer has the information, strength, will, or capacity to access the saving solutions that would prolong life. What is worst, it is often not a matter of some philosophical conviction about helplessness or the inevitability of the end — as in the film *House on Sand* by the late **Ivan Martinac** — but of the determinacy of will and of decision, or of its freedom: a discussion still without conclusion.

As I write this and hold my position, I feel pain, cortisol, and a panic attack when I hear news that my father has fallen again, that he is deteriorating and cannot speak, that he is making unreasonable mistakes trying to recover his strength whilst overestimating his capacity. I feel not only grief, fear, and disbelief that someone so strong and relatively young has been falling and shocking the family for eight years already — but this comes on top of a mass of other deaths, illnesses, and crises in my own family and in the news around us. When the authority figure in the family falls, and old authorities generally disappear — they who are part of us — I wonder whether my mission and independence have not now been given too heavy a challenge. When we see that his illness — SCA1 — cyclically overrides will and recovery, human hope, which is natural, falls again before the meaninglessness of deterioration. But the pattern of instability is now recognised. We often ask how it is for others, whether it is worse for them, and when the struggle makes sense and when talk of "passive euthanasia" becomes a real and practical choice.

The *time window* for acute crisis is short and intense.⁹ There is also a deficit of blood flow to the prefrontal cortex — *oxidation* and the elevation of other biomarkers, as researched by Dr **Rojnić Kuzman** and Dr **Čelić Ružić**. These markers — unlike free neurofilament chains — are rarely investigated in blood or otherwise by those without a history of mental illness, and in time. In the non-clinical phase, the stigma, cost, and resistance to approaching doctors may actually be greater than in the clinical phase. High intelligence or functionality are not indicators of the symptom — which is not news — but those who "live normally" to the end pass through it worse and more invisibly.

Similar patterns were described by **Linda Gask** in *The Other Side of Silence*: patients successfully "concealed" their difficulties and

⁹Dr M. Rojnić Kuzman and Dr M. Čelić Ružić are Croatian psychiatrists whose published research covers biomarkers of mental issues, including oxidative stress indicators and inflammatory markers in the prefrontal cortex. Their work does not bear directly on the present argument; the reference serves only to note that neurobiological correlates of the suicidal state exist and are actively researched in Croatia. Like NFL with SCA1 ataxia and so.

diplomatically hid things — unlike me, who fortunately did the opposite. She herself suffered from depression and bipolar disorder, and noticed the same pattern of "invisibility". She also saw that **knowledge** and **expertise** do not always help — and that she was often silenced even by colleagues. Where she sees a paradox, I see in knowledge a salvation and liberation. Knowledge is always conditioned and partial, however; and if one wants to go deep and wide, it is not easy — only interdisciplinarity and experience, combined with the recognition that knowledge is not absolute and gives not absolute but only relative control over a situation, can do it.

These borderline cases include **shame**, or the decision not to trust family, colleagues, or institutions. One wants to justify the role of the strong and not be vulnerable or intimate before society and doctors. **The intensity of pain** is not what matters — what matters is "the structure of **meaning** that remains or disappears". The problem arises when real and positive wishes meet a weak capacity. Despite the mention of "meaning", logotherapy does not appear in these authors — and conformism is not explicitly examined as a problem that afflicts both the idle and the successful. Habit is the greatest stability and the greatest vulnerability of a human being — who is a being of habit and of desires or goals. But those goals can be redirected or changed — more on this in the rest of the book. Where Frankl or Christians call it *logos*, Gask calls it "*a reason for tomorrow*". The analogy is important, though each of us diverges at the starting cause or the solution.

People isolate and recognise *asymmetry* in their plans or their social position — which is our structural thread and mirror — and isolation leads to ruin. But we saw in the film **Juraj Lerotić's *Safe Place*** — the son of the professor named in the dedication and of my grandfather's assistant — which was Croatia's low-budget Oscar entry,¹⁰ that opening up to the

¹⁰Juraj Lerotić (b. 1978), *Safe Place* (*Sigurno mjesto*, 2022). Autobiographical debut feature based on Lerotić's brother's suicide attempt. World premiere at the 75th Locarno Film Festival, where it won three awards (Best Emerging Director, Best Actor for Goran Marković, Best First Feature/Swatch Award). Croatian candidate for the Academy Award

system also has its drawbacks. The film is based on the real suicide attempt of his brother. At the time, the system seemed far more closed and exceptional. Today a visit to a psychiatrist is even encouraged. My own experience with the police was also nothing like his film — they were empathic towards me. However, the eventual legal dispute between Lerotić and the hospital from which the brother kept escaping showed that the brother's state worsened, because vulnerability was reportedly met with bureaucratic roughness and insufficient information, and the individual's guilt was amplified. Perhaps much was understood only implicitly from context, or the brother read it that way, without malicious intent; but fear and mistrust of strangers who do not fully know what is happening in one's head and history can produce a counter-effect. His escape was also his own decision.

Whilst books often emphasise that "abandonment by one's environment" or friends is the strongest trigger for "giving up" — in this case the brother and mother helped to the maximum, as did some doctors. The absence of a father figure, a trusted "primarius", and a former girlfriend who had left him — these are missing pieces. Guilt can never be purely collective or purely individual; it is necessarily correlating, as is healing. The system is the "guarantee" of treatment — but we are also "guarantors" of our own lives and meaning. What is being attempted today is to objectify the fact that two responsibilities here are not joined but rather two "irresponsibilities": restrictive abrogations of human freedom can never be fully carried through, and eventually collide with the possibility of the free act of the gravest harm and fall of human and state right. The question remains only whether the act was free, or whether treatment is free. More concretely: is our "willing" limited by ourselves and our environment, or never?

All the further work I explore or argue through the maturity of *generativity* as **Erik Erikson** would have it: through the departure from the

for Best International Feature Film at the 95th Oscars (2023). Also won the Heart of Sarajevo (Best Feature Film and Best Actor). Over 45 international awards to date.

elitism of the ego — despite crises and the necessity that one must have one's own peace to investigate others' — empathy becomes not merely a tool of understanding but of active acceptance. How our consciousnesses are networked yet divided in an individuality subject to general laws. For both psychology and philosophy the question is the direction of our thinking and acting.

Popular today are *Zen schools* — but these offer only *ideas* even more abstract than those of our tradition, or than those I am advocating. **Schopenhauer**, whom I mention and whom science has confirmed as not far wrong, leans towards Buddhism though he is an atheist. Buddhism is a religion without a concrete God and not a religion of hope: self-realisation through Nirvana must be "unconscious" — which is impossible to achieve, and no one has achieved it, since death is the common denominator of all, Buddhists included. It is a style of life rather than a philosophy as we know it, nor a science; and reincarnation has less physical evidence than the near-death state. Apart from "karma" and the logic of energy, there also lurks a kind of escape from individual responsibility for one's own life, if all is only cyclic energy. We are genuinely not "ourselves" by cells from one year to the next — but it is absurd to say that our continuity, memories, work, and character means we are billions of separate consciousnesses or souls. We are not. Boredom too — not only worry — can be both contemplation and the evil of idleness.

To return to suicide. It is in my view a *skipping of lower levels to reach a higher one* — something every person has desired at some point. But *struggle, work, and discipline* are the answer to everything, including this question, in the majority of disciplines. The intensity and motive or pleasure of struggle are relative, but without it there is no mental or material happiness in anything. Generation Z is more open and more digital, but also in greater fear and clinical anxiety — whilst my own **Millennial generation** is in the sandwich of cognition. Theologically there lurks in everything the "vice" of **acedia** — the vice of sloth and of the meaninglessness of every act, which can be subsumed under many psychological, practical, and

philosophical phenomena, not only religious ones. Most people are simply in "passive search for salvation", and that is where the problems arise. Some are even in severe **avolition** — and at most 20% of patients actively want to work on themselves. What does that tell us? How can the hole not be too deep if we keep digging it?

Although more patients are satisfied because there is at least some progress or relief, up to 50% are not even reached by treatment — which perhaps does not overload the system — whilst half of those who attend standard treatments are resistant. These are not small percentages. **Existential limits that bring us to emotional flattening** actually shift focus from experience, work, and hope to the mere observation of phenomena around us. Yet the feeling or acquired helplessness is the fall of what constitutes a human being. Better to have the wrong conviction and act wrongly — but remain a *human*. That observation is the opposite of the philosophy of active Observation I develop later. It is the observation that leads to apathy, idleness, and the eternal sleep to which those around me surrendered — and through which I too passed during my studies, to the point where my mother called "energy masters" and placed useless aluminium foil under the bed.

But "cooling of emotions" and **positive disintegration** — as **Dabrowski** would call it — can be a redirecting of attention not merely to *phenomena* but to *being* — essence, then existence, aesthetics, ethics, and so forth. The *cracking of a personality* concerned with trivialities makes room for *holism, breadth, and the observation of others' lives*, and for the wish to be an example of life to other people without the aim of absolute self-gratification or control of the world. The removal of external stimuli and internal impulses or experiences — where reasonable, constructive, and possible — can be something between Buddhism, existentialism, intellectualism, and other faiths, sciences, or psychologies, and precisely liberate a person for *quiet insight and existence* — which is more than sufficient success without a mass of fantasies. Our personality must partly crack not only to transform or concentrate at the extremes — but to

become independent and complete. In that state we may have mistaken assumptions — but not as mistaken as when we are not "ourselves", lacking knowledge, love, spirit, peace, curiosity, and creativity. Only then does our insight have meaning; and suicidality is the typical example of when one completely subjective and objective truth changes all other subjective and objective truths — or at least their possibilities.

WHEN IS THE MOST DANGEROUS PART OF LIFE

Although there have been trends of teenage suicides, the most sensitive group is actually that in their **twenties** — as was the case for me and my wife. The thirties eventually bring stabilisation, at least in terms of maturity and desires. But in those years — and in later ones — the rate of *completion* is higher; whilst the rate of attempts and of the act itself is greatest in the twenties when people are "finding themselves" and expecting much. New generations are also increasingly vulnerable, and older ones retroactively too. Perhaps this reflects the reduction of stigma; perhaps weaker resilience and the clinical labelling of every exaggerated reaction without self-control — something some experts also claim. But *despair* and *accumulated* stress certainly contribute to neurological difficulties or psychological troubles. Mid-life crises also bring entirely new experiences where we face ourselves and our transience more, rather than having norms imposed from above.

The thirties are, for me too despite the divorce, the most stable, strong, and productive. I even noticed that my sexual drive is stronger. Among attempts we can include "plans" or thoughts, so that the global percentage grows and suicidality has become almost a universal phenomenon in at least one part of life when things feel meaningless, painful, and unfree. This ranges from **12%** to as high as **45%**.¹¹ The figures are drawn from SAMHSA,

¹¹Global estimate: approximately 700,000–800,000 deaths by suicide per year (WHO, *Suicide Worldwide in 2019, 2021*; WHO data updated 2023). Suicide is the second or third leading cause of death among those aged 15–29 globally. Rate per 100,000 population: global average approximately 9 (WHO). Suicidal ideation in the general adult population:

Pew Charitable Trusts, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, HZJZ (September 2025), CDC (2025), and KFF (2026). What matters to me is the value of the data rather than methodological dissection of each source, since the approach here — as in the philosophical chapter — is "living psychology" rather than exclusively specialist and cold. The data is verified as free of obvious errors and supports theses useful to all.

DO PEOPLE ANNOUNCE SUICIDE? ARTICULATION AND SLEEP

Jamison emphasises the subjective sense of inevitability — the act seems to the person *logical*, and to those around them they feel a *burden*. She argues that the biological force of severe hopelessness is primary, and that the quantity of "love" is insufficient — medication and psychotherapy are required. **Gask** sees real ambivalence: the simultaneous desire for death as relief and for life. She sees the problem primarily in the human connection between clinician and endangered person, and the signs tend to be *indirectly* articulated.

One sees death as the final act; the other as an opportunity — however subtle — for someone to stop the person. How can even the two of them not have a "consensus"? Jamison, though critical from inside, says that the environment is not generally to blame. Before suicide, *calm* rather than rebellion follows — and I agree that the implicit process is more dangerous than the explicit. But the explicit can be rebellious precisely from the unmasking of society's indifference — or people think it is only one of many

approximately 5% report serious ideation (SAMHSA, *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators*, 2022; CDC WISQARS, 2023; Croatian HZJZ, 2025). Of those with ideation, approximately one third progress to planning; of those with a plan, approximately 50% attempt (NIH/NIMH). Ratio of attempts to deaths: approximately 20:1 globally. One third of attempters retry within one year; completed suicide among attempters over lifetime: 10–15%. Global attempt frequency: one every 40 seconds (HZJZ citing WHO). Croatian annual completed suicides: approximately 500 (DZS). Lifetime suicidal ideation in some form: 12–45% depending on population and methodology (SAMHSA, Pew, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, KFF 2024–2026).

"noises" and have their own troubles. Yet Jamison also states that a prior signal is given, since the statistic I cited holds: **50–80%** of suicidal persons speak openly about it at least once rather than merely planning. In this respect she seems somewhat contradictory.

She mentions ambivalence — yet my grandmother is an example of someone who expressed hatred of life and threatened with poison and jumping from a window, but never did so directly, taking the line of least resistance passively. She refused every offer of help and conversation, however often it was attempted — unless it immediately threw her into panic, and she did not want to organise her own time or thought everyone was against her. Many who say even wild and incomprehensible things are actually performing, but the tone is what matters. As long as negotiation continues, that too is a good sign. Withdrawal — as with my grandmother — is the most dangerous. Something similar was true for my half-sister's grandfather.

Sleep is a crucial problem. People enter tunnel vision more easily and make fatal decisions when they are not sleeping — as we saw in Lerotić's film. For me, morning was the critical time when I was alone at home, along with the unfamiliarity of the terrain in a new flat however comfortable I felt. In everything else, afternoon is key for me (for anxiety or work), whilst early evening was often the time for "depression", and night the danger of impulsive decisions or heavier energies.

It is precisely for *borderline personality disorder* that the claim is made that the behaviour is "attention-diverting" or manipulation — but I never did this "intentionally". It was borderline between *intent for actual suicide* (which was still in fear and without good means but with daily planning) and *the desire for others' help and integration*. Jamison also holds that it is about unbearable pain rather than performance. Precisely the desensitisation of the environment pushes the person to prove they are courageous. *Depression + agitation/impulsivity* is what is truly dangerous — and that was my situation too, though with clear consciousness and no opiates. The author herself attempted suicide — but she justifies it with

biology and partly the system, which can often be an excuse for characterological instability. She argues for extended hospitalisation, which is often a violation of personal rights. She believes people perform wellness to return to the old life; whereas I was not performing to return to the old life — I had a real plan of work and exit from that "prison" — but I performed only in that I wanted not to be kept too long and not given drugs that gave me headaches, though I was afraid to say so.

Fear that psychiatrists are performing is our greatest fear. Psychiatrists — like police officers — cannot and must not reveal all the tools of their trade and of research still in progress; but if there is no trust in them (as in, say, good surgeons) they become an additional burden and "enemy" to the mind — and that is a fact. After a month, everyone will say the person simply statistically fell and it is no longer anyone's conscience because "the system cannot save everyone".

Roughly **one third** of persons who have attempted suicide will try again within a year. It is not a large proportion. But the risk is immediate after an attempt, in the first year. The more attempts, the greater the danger — but it amounts to "only" **10–15%** of those who have attempted. One suicide occurs globally every **40 seconds**; attempts are up to 20 times more frequent; annually nearly **a million people** die directly — **1% of all deaths**. Suicide is the **second or third cause of death** among those aged up to 29. Suicidal ideation affects approximately **5%** of the general adult population; of those, about a third progress to planning; of those with a plan, up to **50%** attempt. Timely intervention of any serious kind drastically reduces attempt rates — according to the Psychiatric Clinic Vrapče and the Croatian Institute of Public Health.

THE HOSPITAL AS "CAGE" OR SALVATION? THE TABLET AS PROBLEM OR CURE?

Jamison is a proponent of the thesis that a person in acute illness is not in a state to "decide" — and that they will be grateful afterwards. Some philosophers, on the other hand, regard this as a form of coercion, contrary to the right to self-determination and co-decision about one's own condition. Jamison herself attempted suicide by refusing the lithium she now advocates — because she feared losing her creative control, her impulse, her consciousness; and because it gave her dizziness and nausea. Many drugs or operations "hurt" for a greater good, and today the process of pain is smaller than it was; the history of lobotomies for patients who were merely undisciplined appears devastating in retrospect, as do the various medical experiments of less than a century ago in Europe.

Evil does not have to be "ill", and ill people can actually be the most honest, perceptive, or sometimes the most intelligent — Jamison herself was a suicidal expert, a dissident and an advocate of the system at once. Serious conditions are borderline. But on the question of "choice" in illness, I differ from her. In my view, every illness was once — *a choice* (in steps, in behaviour, even in love for the feeling the illness provides). Jamison would distance herself from this, and in the early stages even Augustine would agree — but I deliberately press towards this distance and provocation, and towards causality, in the majority of processes that later become genuinely endogenous. It is not the pain that is chosen — but the illness. I hold this firmly, though it is difficult to prove; it is philosophically relevant. Patterns of behaviour and decision, regardless of motivation, produce more consequences than we suppose.

Just as the support of the environment helps recovery by some 40%, so the restlessness of the environment — and of ourselves — creates by-products we did not expect. We are all children who are surprised by something only once it has already happened. Evil and misfortune are even factors of awakening — signals that something is wrong — but the fear of evil's monopoly and its double effect (producing both good and bad

consequences, intentional and unintentional) drives us towards excessive anxiety. Although bad experiences are demonstrated to affect the immune system and the brain more strongly than "good days", it is nonetheless true that illness and bad experiences occupy a minority of human time and life.

The question is how to prove whether someone is performing or only becoming wounded at being made an "object" — which a clinical bureaucracy sometimes requires, not against the patient as such but precisely for their benefit. Doctors are aware that a diagnosis (if a serious one) may offend — and rightly should have no place for offence. But it did offend me — not only the diagnosis itself, but the way "equality and affability" is performed to extract data. My next assessment I simply did not attend, having noticed that certain persons were manipulating me. The ability to read the signs of the clinician — not only of the patient — is underestimated. Cortisol is measurable (though every person is under stress), but by methods not yet available in all hospitals for all hormones, and a blood test is insufficient.

What is encouraging is the experiment of the "leave" — the short break that comes critical after about a week. Whilst some flee (as in Lerotić's film) and others lose all interest and vitality, those no longer drawn to suicide do something third. During one such leave I had an intimate encounter with a fellow patient; I returned cheerful and on time, with a slight delay. My conscience remained troubled by the marriage, but cortisol had of course dropped; I played table tennis, exercised, and was not performing recovery — I would have had to be a virtuoso manipulator to engineer that against the system and myself. My condition was genuinely lighter. And this illustrates something: the "proof" of a patient's state is not the content of the leave but the return.

Most patients are not *narcissists* looking for competition — they genuinely need only help and the desire to belong somewhere, even in hospital. Patients help and calm one another. The "drugged" appearance does not look like cure; I do not think awareness is abolished even then. What is the purpose of treatment to the level of pill-dependence when the

person will cause no harm either way? Where harm will occur, pills or alcohol are only needed acutely. The complex of superiority or inferiority — present everywhere, including in the clinic — must be reduced on both sides; but hierarchy, order, and directness must exist. Most people have a reasonable decision; illnesses and excesses are manageable, though the formula is hard because people differ.

The cold part of the system never views lived experience as an advantage — it views itself as the exemplar (though not always morally, as heavy corruption scandals show) — and relegates those who are both experts and patients to the category of "patient". There is a logic to this, but it is also where the truth is thinnest.

Gask speaks of "**institutional distance**" and a "**language barrier**" — the collision between "diagnosis" and "story". She inclines more towards therapy and the process of thinking because her own diagnosis differs from Jamison's pure bipolar disorder. The problem, I would add, is the story that is too short or too long — combined with time, material, and medical constraints where no surgical intervention is involved (and, mercifully, no lobotomy; whilst the debate about modern electroconvulsive therapy — its effect on receptors, memory, pain, and confidence, with differing patient reports — continues). In every intervention that is too gentle or too invasive, the alternative is weighed after the fact. Stabilisation of a state is not the same as recovery or the right path.

The system cannot save everyone — it is imperfect, as we are. Both authors place **biology** first, then **isolation**, then **the system**. Spirituality is left untouched — whilst shelves grow heavy with various "voodoo" books that have no scientific grounding.

What we agree on — theirs and my conclusion — is that *one* doctor, person, nurse, friend, professor, critic, anyone, even a stranger, can make at least a significant difference and save a life and a meaning. Together with **personal decision** — which in later years should at least be independent, with the person both realistic and satisfied. Whilst in children everything rests on play and the less-developed *prefrontal cortex* of prediction and

self-control (though even that is a limited insight), in adults this develops — but also shocks, when one realises that the future is genuinely not infinite, nor is one's strength, and sources of satisfaction or surprise are diminishing — though paradoxically there are also fewer desires and dissatisfactions. That is why everyone in old age wants only "peace" more than meaning. The problem arises when it cannot be found. Being someone who challenges the system, or a witness who wants to save both system and individual, is not nothing — and the meaning is its own reward, even if it necessarily attracts negative commentary.

They are **empiricists** who admit that medicine is good but insufficient, gentle but surgical critics from inside. I am a **social being** and a creative person from inside and outside who does not reject biology, but does not place it before spirit and the humanistic questions. The gap between "the street" and "the clinic" is real — but it is narrowing, and case studies and the approach of the lay person to the lay are even becoming desirable. The system, however, meets unfamiliar and slippery terrain here, especially in an age of information.

Whilst I was expecting both my own end and my father's, the impression kept deceiving me. And I note that **Chuck Norris** died on 19 March 2026 — having been cheerful and training the day before, on his 86th birthday on the island of Kaua'i. The books often describe "the sudden collapse of a functioning person" — whilst in my case the slalom was visible across the whole of my student life, but could not be seen from outside. Whilst people today are killed by constant **unrest**, they are equally killed by "false peace" — the attachment to routines that give the false shine of **conformism**. This conformism either breaks with some event (redundancy, pandemic, retirement, war) or conceals a flight rather than satisfaction from within. Christianity is precisely either tragic, pessimistic, or anti-conformist — and therefore attractive. Despite the widespread spirituality and faith on the Western side, the authors do not mention it. It is always "unwelcome terrain" — but integrating restlessness into the whole is a simple logic of the response to chronic self-rescue. It is a fact that over 85% of humanity

formally "believes in something" or considers itself spiritual, driven by some ethics, morality, or faith. If we take atheism too as a faith rather than a fact, spirituality is used surprisingly little — or over-dimensioned — in all systems, including ecclesiastical ones.

Today's eclecticism takes what suits it from everywhere and goes to the end of nothing. The key problem is the question of the limits of our endurance and the taking of a position — as *Viktor Frankl* does in every situation where our freedom is limited (and it never is complete). When it is complete, what does our *hubris* then mean, when it has no retributive or lamentation-based foundation? The desire for what does not belong to us, disorder, sin, or the physical need for change and a "dopamine hit" against boredom? That is probably a historical question — but the statistics are interesting, as is my personal answer, which wants at least to "outrun" these books or transmit the most important of their information.

WHAT IS AT THE BEGINNING — DECISION OR ACT/EVENT?

The union of neuroscience and psychological testimonies often gives primacy to biology — and to *Libet's experiments* — but overall it is still *decision*, however much it has its objective causal beginning. The question is only how that psychological decision is reached, and how determined it is.

Decision programmes the system, and the "silent killer" is the sum of small things — the spine of my own testimonies. Equally invisible is the "silent survival" I had through the "wild" activities I changed every year. We are all connected. But the pre-phase of illness is a characterological risk. Later the pattern is simply repeated or radically broken — which creates stress in the body either way. The only question is whether it is *eustress*, *distress*, construction, destruction, or a stalemate. Freedom is in any case too heavy a resource for a human being — our nature falls to a lower

position, though it renews itself strongly by returning to the higher. But in my view that cycle is not necessary. It is a false appearance. Paradise need not be a "boring" place where everything is exhausted. A child's play is not far from paradise and contains more good than evil. The stretching of freedom, inertia, and possibility is not an automatism driving one towards something "new" and forbidden — it is pure experiment. We return to our grooves as though nothing happened — but ask ourselves how it ever could have.

Sapolsky goes so far as to say that even *unethicality* is necessity — that society must protect itself (why, then, must it protect itself, and does that change reality?) but not condemn the transgressor, who in their circumstances had that as their only choice.¹² Judas therefore by this logic was mathematically obliged to betray Jesus — though no one compelled him whilst others were not obliged to betray. This would also be discrimination, contrary to the very idea of Christianity. For Sapolsky even the fact that he is a scientist is necessity — even the act of thanking someone for a kind gesture is determinism; that person, he thinks, was bound to do it in order to balance something in their own head. He acknowledges that mind and emotion are ultimately illusion and that he lives with this. It is radical and contrary to common intuition — but genuinely interesting. Where genes are concerned there is no mystery that they influence behaviour — as in suicide. But it is easier to measure molecules than spirit, and neurons themselves are in millions of connections.

¹²Robert **Sapolsky**, *Determined: A Science of Life Without Free Will* (Penguin Press, 2023). Sapolsky argues that every human decision is the downstream result of biology, genetics, and prior environment, with no residual causal gap for free will. The author acknowledges the ethical and emotional difficulty of this position whilst maintaining it is the scientifically correct one. The author of this book disagrees — see the discussion in the philosophical chapter — but cites Sapolsky as the most rigorous contemporary representative of the determinist position.

Scientists such as **Roger Penrose** already argue that the human mind is not a classical computer.¹³ If love is a chemical reaction and interest, then freedom is already something too far to push under an absolutely clean determinism. **Norman Doidge, Robert Whitaker, George L. Engel, Martin Seligman, and Anna Lembke** all argue that the problem is not quantity or necessity but balance and stability — and that pure being is always more than having; play and creation more than destruction or rumination. **Huberman** also holds that paradise is not boredom. In accordance with my book's thesis, everything may ultimately rest on — Observation: the direction of attention. That is both freedom and decision in at least some order, and it constitutes an independent entity and characteristic of the human being since history began. The brain awakens the person — but decision also awakens the brain.

PERCENTAGES, RECOVERY, AND A BASIC DIVISION OF PSYCHIATRY

Every social crisis either strengthens individual responsibility or deepens collapse. Were society ideal there would be no problems — and perhaps no illness. By estimate, only around **10% of psychiatrists** worldwide practise (pure or predominant) **existential or existentialist psychiatry** — all others practise **biological psychiatry**. Of that 10%, roughly half are atheist and half religious. The paradox is that the total half of believers among all psychiatrists mostly practises biological psychiatry. I see the separation of technique and spirit as a process towards synthesis — not of faith and

¹³ Norman Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself* (Viking, 2007); Robert Whitaker, *Anatomy of an Epidemic* (Crown, 2010); George L. Engel, "The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine", *Science* 196 (1977); Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism* (Knopf, 1991); Anna Lembke, *Dopamine Nation* (Dutton, 2021). These authors converge on the view that the problem is not quantity of stimulation but balance and stability; that neuroplasticity permits genuine change; and that overreliance on pharmacology, to the exclusion of meaning and agency, prolongs rather than resolves disorder. Roger Penrose's argument that the human mind is not a classical computer is developed in *The Emperor's New Mind* (Oxford, 1989) and *Shadows of the Mind* (Oxford, 1994).

science, but of truth. They fear that any merging would create confusion and the "sneer". But that separation is also justified by the fact that faith is a "private matter" that neither the professional nor the patient is obliged to introduce. Yet faith is more than a tool or an illusion. It is a reality of humanity and of the human mind — and **Chesterton** would say that even romance is "part of reality", not always escape and fiction.

I would structure the question of goal and meaning in three levels that would personally help me — and clearly help others:

- ◆Repair of a past goal and meaning (where possible)
- ◆Recovery from a past goal and transition towards a new, related goal and meaning — *sublimation*
- ◆Planning and setting a completely new goal and meaning (where also possible)

I had to do this work on myself and with my new psychiatrist — before her I was only told: "We will monitor your affairs." Report and monitoring create a powerful motivation for the next session, if honest and if setback is not treated as shame and a new diagnosis. The problem: most patients do not even manage the first option — they treat only the symptom. Almost no one attempts the second or third after examining the first; no one cumulates. Why? What is striking is that this is not only because of the psychiatrists — it is because of the patients themselves. Approximately **70% of patients** are not interested in structural change; they mostly stay silent or rummage through old problems in more or less eloquent ways.

Viktor Frankl states that as many as **25% of cases** suffer from pure *existential vacuum* and considers *loss of meaning* the **exclusive** reason for mental disorder in that quarter.¹⁴ That is a substantial figure in relation to

¹⁴Viktor **Frankl**, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Beacon Press, 1959 [orig. 1946]). Frankl estimated that approximately 20–25% of neurotic patients suffered primarily from an *existential vacuum* — a loss of meaning — rather than from biological or purely psychological causes. For this subset, logotherapy (the therapeutic mobilisation of meaning and purpose) was not merely adjunctive but primary. See also Frankl, *The Will to Meaning* (New American Library, 1969).

its resolution. Only 10–15% reach the second level, and around 5% the third. Without boasting, over five years I reached the third level — with objective reasons for my residual anxiety, since before the illnesses and deaths in the family, my *remission* in the new marriage lasted three uninterrupted years. Problems were resolved at small and medium scale. The harder the situation was objectively but the rarer it came, the faster my resilience grew. It only needed a longer pause of a "calm" and fulfilled life — and here I was perhaps lucky in being able to do what I love. Therefore: **patients prompt doctors and doctors prompt patients on the question of meaning and goal in only 5–10%.** From one angle this part becomes attractive, and the unintended specialisation actually prevents system overloading. From another, someone gains self-awareness through it — and someone loses all strength and faith because they "cannot be bothered" to search for the honest, skilled, and authentic persons who will understand them.

Lower levels of depression and anxiety in sublimation — my second type — are clear and almost uniformly measurable (*correlation coefficient* $r = 0.49$), and recovery reaches about **85%**. Stability in the phase of long-term remission can reach as high as **98%**. But belonging in a community outside therapy is equally crucial — to any community and any activity — and consultations themselves can become a place of "safety" rather than fear. When I arrived at my doctor's office after the hardest period of this winter, I said: "Dear God, what peace. If only I could stay here forever. I feel so protected and safe — I have been waiting for this for months." I knew the time was limited, that distance is the relationship's greatest advantage rather than flaw, and that the sudden cortisol drop was itself a bad indicator of how much it accumulates and craves such an outlet. But the purpose of the hospital was fulfilled: as a significant respite and place of trust for a *normal*, not a sick, life.

A further word on the percentages, before we move on — these are not precise figures but the direction of trends and of my own intuition gathered across years of reading, observation, and conversation in the field (with

sources broadly such as *SAMHSA, the National Institute of Mental Health, the Croatian Institute for Public Health, the Pew Charitable Trusts*, and the published research of clinicians such as Jamison, Joiner, and our own psychiatric institutions). The reader may verify them in their own way. I just wanna show the *trends* and right intuitions or problems in divisions.

Roughly **10% of psychiatrists worldwide** practise — in pure or majority form — *existential or existentialist psychiatry*, while all the others practise biological psychiatry. That existentialism, moreover, is itself split into roughly **half theistic** (logotherapy, Daseinsanalyse with religious orientation, meaning-centred approaches) and half *atheistic* (existential analysis without metaphysical commitment). What is more striking still is that this is not only a matter of psychiatrists. *Patients themselves, in around 70%, are not interested in structural change either* — they prefer either silence or to dig through old problems in a more or less eloquent way. And so, *patients and doctors prompt one another to the question of meaning and goal in only 5 to 10% of encounters*. From one side, this scarcity makes the existential conversation strangely attractive and acts as an unintended specialised prevention, since the system is no longer congested with people who go nowhere. From the other, this very rarity means that those who could benefit most from it never reach it.

Frankl himself estimated, on his clinical sample, that as many as **25% of his patients suffered from pure existential vacuum** and considered the *loss of meaning* the exclusive cause of disorder in that quarter — a substantial figure when set against the resources allocated to such questions. Only about **10–15% reach the second level of working through these questions**, and around **5% the third**. Without boasting, over the five years I reached the third level — and what residual anxiety I carry has its objective grounds in the illnesses and deaths in the family, while my own remission in my second marriage lasted three uninterrupted years.

On the other side of the divide, the *deterministic biological school still commands roughly 60% of the field* — the rest split between cognitive-behavioural, psychodynamic, integrative, and existential approaches.

Pharmacotherapy, while indispensable in many cases, accounts on average for only **10–20%** of *complete recovery*, though its turnover is vast and its brands change with the years. If clinicians themselves were to bring even a little more *energy or resource* into the encounter — by which I mean attention to meaning, not merely to symptom — passivity and the "*zombie effect*" would, by my own intuition, drop by something like **40%**. Up to **50%** of *patients are not even reached by treatment in the first place* (which may not, in fact, overload the system), while about **half** of those who do attend standard treatments are *resistant* — figures published, among others, by the Centre for Disorders here in Zagreb and from comparable institutions abroad.

There is also a stratum, perhaps **20%**, of *endogenous depression* — biological anhedonia, "broken receptors", a "short circuit" in someone who, by their own honest testimony, has no bad life to point to. Of this stratum, the smaller fraction of *therapy-resistant melancholics* — *about 1%* — would still wish to get up, go to work, see their wife and children, and would still recover in something like **60–70%** if they were not broken by the stigma and confusion of the diagnosis itself.

Of the figures around suicide proper: roughly **50%** of *psychiatrists encounter a suicide at least once in their career* and many carry guilt or PTSD afterwards. The few weeks following discharge from hospital are the most dangerous period — *Jamison notes that 10–15% of all suicides occur in this short window* — and the risk of suicide is up to *a hundred times higher in those first weeks* than at any other point. Objective error in care — whether clinical, administrative, or simple miscommunication — accounts for perhaps **20–30%**; if we add the patient's own grievance and unintended slights, the figure rises closer to **50%**. The question is whether this is little or much. I do not know that I am the one to judge; but as a witness from the inside, I can say at least that the number is not invented.

I add one final figure, which is in some ways the most important. *Around 85% of humankind formally believes in something or considers itself spiritual*, and is moved by some ethic, morality, or faith — and if we count

atheism itself as a faith and not as a fact, then in truth almost no one uses *no* spiritual category at all. And yet so few actually *practise* it, in any sustained way, that the question becomes not *whether* the spiritual matters but *why we have lost the daily form of it* — and what kind of psychiatry, of philosophy, of community, would have to exist for it to return into the ordinary day of an ordinary person. These percentages, taken together, are the structural reason for everything else in this book.

EXPERIENCES OF PSYCHIATRISTS WITH SUICIDE — AND OF EMPLOYERS WITH ME

As many as **50% of psychiatrists** encounter suicide at least once during their career and feel guilt or PTSD. And precisely after discharge from hospital and treatment, the risk of suicide is up to **100 times greater** than in the general population — because the outside world is often an even greater cage. I saw my freedom as an opportunity for real freedom and proof that I would not abuse the system's trust to my own or its detriment. Fear did not paralyse me — it motivated me to stay "outside". On the first day I trembled, thinking I would be involuntarily locked in because I had not returned after the weekend. But that is a separate procedure — and the divided responsibility to "escape" is mine as well, as in Lerotić's case. It is unfair, however, that we who arrive disordered from a disordered world transfer blame to the hospital in which we seek a solution to our problem. The hospital is our mirror — part of both us and the system — but in the worst case bears only a third of the responsibility, and not all psychiatrists are cold. Many suffer for all the problems and carry the weight of their work, where habituation is their only exit. Who will treat them? Every case is separate and unpredictable.

Jamison states that 10–15% of all suicides occur in the few weeks immediately after discharge from hospital. Given those of us who did not die — and the other 80% — is that figure small or large? I do not want to

count people in a number. But is not also the work of professionals and their education endlessly valuable — and often underpaid — and not eternal either, ending in retirement where they are frequently isolated? Is it not the harsh reality of both faith and science that no one can live forever here, and that there is no cure for everything? **20–30%** is some objective error. Add the "offensiveness" of the patient and unintentional lapses and raise that to 50% — is that small or large? Half of half of psychiatrists carry a wrong conscience and a burden; the other half carry a right conscience or none (because they work by the rules, whatever they are). No one except ourselves — and sometimes not even family — can be with us 24 hours. Nor do we want that. We are also hypocrites: we want and do not want help. We want a life service in hospital which we then pay for with a coffee and a box of chocolates.

The pharmacological industry has a **10–20% effect** on complete recovery, yet its revenue is enormous.¹⁵ If doctors invested even a fraction of that energy and resource in existential work, the rate of passivity and "zombie effect" would fall by **40%**. These percentages are not precise to the decimal point — but they correspond to studies by Kirsch, Cipriani et al. (2018 and other years) in *The Lancet*. Medicine must have its industrial production line — but "psychology" in psychiatry should be more like a "workshop of meaning" — of suffering and joy, life and death — for lighter and medium disorders. That is the hardest and simultaneously the easiest task and solution, though the doctor must respect degrees and the statistics of bad experience are not the only truth. The number of patients is growing; the percentage or number of "exceptions" among staff remains

¹⁵ Irvin **Kirsch** et al., "Initial Severity and Antidepressant Benefits: A Meta-Analysis of Data Submitted to the Food and Drug Administration", *PLOS Medicine* 5(2) (2008). Cipriani et al., "Comparative Efficacy and Acceptability of 21 Antidepressant Drugs", *The Lancet* 391 (2018): 1357–1366. The Kirsch meta-analysis found that the drug–placebo difference was below clinical significance for mild-to-moderate depression, though substantial for severe depression. The Cipriani review confirmed that antidepressants outperform placebo across the range but varied considerably in side-effect profiles. The author's point is not that pharmacotherapy is useless but that it accounts for a fraction of the variance in full recovery, and that existential and relational components carry at least equal weight.

the same; the danger is that they become overcapacitated and end up in the "industrial zone" too.

Jerome Motto's "*Letters of hope*" — the finding that a single letter from the hospital was enough to cut the suicide rate by **50%** in the months after discharge — looked banal and has been criticised, yet the number is neither invented nor irrelevant.¹⁶ A letter of thanks for a song (from a church), and an encouragement to sing it into life — at **Sente's** in Karlovac — gave me enormous happiness. I felt worthy and alive, like after movie praisal. So too did the review of a film. Literally saving my confidence and life — as did my new wife's testimony of my true nature, and the true weight of good and bad in our cohabitation, where the good far outweighs the bad by far. And what if a doctor called to ask how you were — without calculation? Can you imagine how hard it would be to go and kill yourself after that?... My father on the other side recovered from traumas on the rivers, but he overwhelmed his capacity of "bigamy" and had lots of traumas from childhood.

About jobs, people believed me at work and I was humble, shy, but my motives were 'outside'. I saw their strong "spirit", not condemning me, but they gave me a chance also knowing that maybe I will just leave when my concentration falls. So, our mutual goodness was a double-edged sword. Sometimes they would give me a trust or forgive on their own risk.

MY GREAT "YES" TO THE SYSTEM AGAINST MY CRITIQUE

A MITIGATION FOR PSYCHIATRY, THE CHURCH, AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Many of my sections are directed at critique or analysis of the system and of ourselves. But we must perhaps begin from my most important position — the last perspective in which the secret lies. Instead of "closing into camps", the dichotomy of "us–them" again, we must examine the intention of psychiatry and the system to genuinely help people and make them productive — an intention that is both utilitarian and altruistic, and genuinely mutual and just. Why does it so often stall? Because today the truth is too painful.

The rigidity of the system or of medicine need not be in absolute control, secrecy, medicalisation, or the isolation of science and work. But in the **honest, brutal position** towards the patient and their responsibility, a risky beginning of any discussion should be:

YOU ARE ILL FOR MULTIPLE REASONS — BUT YOUR CONDITION AND YOUR FUTURE ARE EXCLUSIVELY THE PRODUCT OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AND YOUR "WRONG" WAYS OF LIVING. (?!)

Whilst both biologists and existentialists recoil from such a possible formulation — it could send the patient into systemic collapse, both theirs and the professional's — it contains the crucial removal of gloves. All my examples above, including my own, are of people who are successful and disciplined in something, and undisciplined in something else. All had the cause of their psychological problem in a *one-sided vision* of the world and of success. That vision frequently conflicts with logic or effort, and is closed through inertia leading to a worsening of the state — and the exit becomes genuinely harder. But precisely: **our freedom is carried on our determination, and discipline leads us to our freedom.** Why? All of us worked very hard at some things and heavily avoided others. We expected

that with the years only the good side would be called to account, not the bad. That results and a predictable life would arrive with a little additional satisfaction — not amortisation, fatigue, and the "bill" for that other style of living. That debt looks like a Schopenhauerian random and unjust result — and a person truly cannot have everything in discipline. But that does not change the fact that our first step determines the last, and that health genuinely exists *before* illness. I call this the "**Chernobyl Effect**".¹⁷ The catastrophe at Chernobyl did not begin with the explosion — it was borne over years of deferred small decisions, and months of covering the image of orderly Soviet society against the functionality and safety of citizens. It was not only a history of the reactor; it was a conscious or unconscious neglect — legally speaking, perhaps even an indirect intention — to pay a heavy price not only for technological but for political gain in the fight for power and the defence of ego.

Taking **Sapolsky** as the greatest counter-argument whilst simultaneously acknowledging the hardest proof: is he the one who "comforts himself and patients", or am I? The following — stripped to the bone — shows where the problem lies:

- **CHANGE OF ENVIRONMENT OR POSITIVE ACTIVITIES ARE A BIOLOGICAL TOOL** — not merely neuroplastic — for increased capacity of insight, neuroplasticity, and psychological growth. This is where the two "psychiatric" policies intertwine and their conflict over cause or solution begins. Pharmacotherapy we leave as neither the key problem nor the key solution here.
- **A PERSON WHO ENTERS A CLINICAL STATE OF DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY** feels they must make around **5 times the effort** for the

¹⁷Charles **Duhigg**, *The Power of Habit* (Random House, 2012). James Clear, *Atomic Habits* (Avery, 2018). Both authors document the neurological basis of habit formation and the compounding effect — positive and negative — of small repeated actions on the brain's reward circuitry. The author's "Chernobyl effect" analogy refers to this cumulative dimension: the catastrophe does not begin at the moment of explosion but in a pattern of small deferred decisions.

same result and "reward" — which is either equal to or greater than what was invested.

- Researchers at Stanford — and Sapolsky himself, writing in *Nature* and elsewhere — show how dopamine receptors dull and require more impulses. Increased cognitive effort is required. This leads to further worsening not only of the hormonal and prefrontal base but of the bases for reasonable and voluntary decision. That includes the density of hippocampal synapses and higher systems — **basal ganglia, dorsolateral prefrontal cortex** and so forth. The longer the same state persists, **anhedonia and dysfunction of the mesolimbic system** follow.
- Secretion of **BDNF** is an inevitable and successful result of effort despite resistance. **Dr John Ratey** of Harvard, author of *Spark*, regards this protein as one of the crucial ones that repair "burnt-out" nerves from stress.¹⁸ Its effect is comparable to that of SSRIs or other antidepressants — and it changes the brain more durably, with less habituation.
- *Avoidance* maintains depression — there is no great philosophy here. This is confirmed by various meta-analyses in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*.
- **THE KEY PROBLEM: action always, and especially now, precedes motivation** — even according to Sapolsky. But here is the key. His determinism is a window into free will and truth. My *refusal* to prevent, bring to consciousness, and take into account the lack of discipline I carried in life, or the burnout in a single direction of habituated success — comes to account, cumulatively. The brain programmes itself equally "badly" whether one must invest minimal effort or five times more now. Our wish and habit for comfort, or

¹⁸John J. Ratey and Eric Hagerman, *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* (Little, Brown, 2008). Ratey's research at Harvard demonstrates that aerobic exercise stimulates BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor) at rates comparable to SSRI antidepressants, with fewer side effects and more durable neuroplastic change. The author cites this not as a counsel to replace medication but to underline that physical action is a first-order biological — not merely psychological — intervention.

the expectation of justice with absolute freedom which we refuse to relinquish, by physical law brings harder, not easier, days in the future.

However — with the years, especially before dementia, our centre for prediction and connection actually works better than ever, despite the load. Most people *have knowledge* — they simply *do not wish to change their approach to that knowledge*. This concerns the great majority. Sapolsky would conclude that those who "will not be moved" have simply connected information with the prediction that the alternative produces greater damage. But where is the great science in that? Is not calculation the hallmark of humanity — even conviction? Those who lose both knowledge and the power to trigger action before motivation are truly determined — or at a 99% probability. The others are not — or simply not yet in the same phase.

Regarding my grandmother: her withdrawal into the house and strange unreasonable decisions began while I was still a child. Her neglect perhaps lasted fifty years by my father's account. Both her intrinsic and extrinsic channels were blocked — I tried, even by force, to reach her mind. This is a genuine problem and a diagnosis not formed overnight. Her glutamates and other inflammatory processes in the neural paths did not begin two days before death and were not "determined". She has that click — the shutdown when her comfort is disturbed. But in that very click lies the "medical history". Mild autism, years, and habits play their role — but it is not true that she had no free will, or that her case was a heroic act, or that my better health in better years is simply fortune. Fortunately such things can even be established with fMRI — but it is never done, let alone through a long period of monitoring and work.

Consider younger patients: they have inertia already at 30. In a world where no work and no discomfort exist — however much work should be satisfaction and care for one's being — most people over **70%** remain inert and *choose* inertness. Whilst it is logically interesting to say that a person with heavier predispositions succeeds because it is subjectively easier for

them, this is a complete devaluation of the effort, commitment, and achievement of those who persisted in the discipline of work or recovery.

Pharmakology actually has a **10–20% effect** on complete recovery. But if doctors invested only that energy or resource into this work, the chance of passivity and the "zombie effect" would fall by **40%**. All of us wait to feel good instead of working for our good — and feeling good *whilst we wait*. Atomic habits are the best beginning — and perhaps also the end of the solution — alongside the awareness that perhaps catastrophe will never happen to us, but nor will absolute happiness. To live life in such a balance, holding one's own position on death: that is the only solution. And every self-destructive position or behaviour cannot be true — because what, then, of the examples that are not defeatist?

A fellow patient who was also filming a film told me: "Why do you think I will have a child who will suffer and that I am living in an illusion? There are some who do not suffer whilst alive and do not suffer whilst dying." I thought she was deceiving herself and me — she who was her own witness of suffering, however meaningful. But later I saw: what if she is right? What if **Bismarck** is right in saying that life is a visit to the dentist dreading the worst — and the worst has already passed? Allostatic load and severe immobility produce the same result. One need only recognise one's own pattern — which is even universal. The hero is the one who simply refuses to become a failure or a criminal. It is not high intelligence that is needed — not Einstein — to see, as an average educated person with some experience, that this is the catch: that my "freeloading" in youth has come to collect its dues, but good things have also come. And that the freeloading can still be paid — perhaps five times more, by daily campaigning. It is easier to pay five times every day than ten or fifteen, because I *choose the lesser evil*. The brain lies about the lesser evil. And even with smaller steps, it is no sin to have larger goals — a book, a film, a journey. But we must be able either to find new, larger and realistic goals, or to have smaller ones (a walk, music, a film, even a bad one, a shower) — but always to have a *goal*.

My grandmother, as long as she had the goal of solving crosswords as her last activity, solved them better than I or you the reader. I have proof at home of how it appears a different person wrote them. The problem was that she concentrated everything into activities that were shrinking and did not include care for her own health. Health renews itself also through the activities of health itself — hygiene, exercise — and through other "distractions". Now success is no longer the overriding thing, whereas before it exhausted me. Stress is not the problem; the problem is that no one wants to acknowledge the cause of stress in roots from twenty years ago and the body's long endurance up to now. We all want to "forget" our bad history and remember only the bad history of the environment.

Our decision and action are in themselves will against our own inner "tyrant". Then motivation may come alongside or afterwards. If it does not, or if we no longer have motivation or large goals, our hardest challenge is to *bring to consciousness the fact* that **knowledge plus any bodily and spiritual positive act** *automatically* heals. The secret is this: to go for a walk even when we find it boring. Because we are creating an opportunity for tomorrow. Even if we hate tomorrow — knowing that we are ageing — we can comfort ourselves that we will live no longer than a hundred to a hundred and twenty years, and that this could be the deadline at which we show we are human. The inner voice must be clear. Often it is — but we silence it. We do not want "stupid goals" and we do not know which goals are stupid or where they will take us. We have been proven wrong on this a hundred times.

A simple formula — is it not? But we genuinely *cannot* and *do not want* to accept a formula that seems illogical to us and yet mirrors the logic of history — not only of this world but perhaps of paradise. Paradise cannot be received if not wanted. Not if deserved — but if we do not accept that action in every condition is the only salvation for a being created for action. Sleep is beautiful because it is light — but not even that reality would fulfil us. Why do I now want at any price to write something useful? Because creativity is a healthy mark of the human being, even if no one reads it.

"CANNOT / DO NOT WANT" is still half-half — whilst determinism and anti-determinism are only radical opposites that do not in fact exclude the other possibility. But the temporal order and honesty towards oneself matter. Who still believes only the system is to blame — or only we?

WHAT ELSE HELPS WITH DEPRESSION IN THE BROADER SENSE — AND IS NOT "POPULAR"?

The doctoral dissertation of **Sanea Mihaljević**, "The Influence of Spirituality on Suicidality and the Speed of Recovery in Patients with Depression", cites studies showing risk of suicide reduced by **60 to even 80%** among spiritually engaged individuals — in a broad and practical sense.¹⁹ The protective factor is present across depression, loss, confrontation with death, and terminal illness. This is where "meaning" enters the picture. Other professors, such as Ljubičić, engage with the same dimension — but for me it sometimes meant great help and sometimes fanaticism, or rather pessimism. That was even the case with my fellow patient in hospital who felt that "God" had tricked and punished us all. Yet his very complaint showed that he had a "will" for life and that it was only an outburst. I became increasingly moderate and saw that excessive optimism and excessive pessimism can be equally destructive. But despite errors I wanted to strip bare our existence and destiny.

Although I learnt much on religious questions and distinguished the quasi-religious from the traditional and, to me, logical — I saw that I needed to know other things and to live in practice. No extreme would fulfil

¹⁹**Sanea Mihaljević**, "Utjecaj duhovnosti na suicidalnost i brzinu oporavka oboljelih od depresije" [*The Influence of Spirituality on Suicidality and the Speed of Recovery in Patients with Depression*], doctoral dissertation (Croatia, year 2014 medilib.mef.hr on 10.5.2026.). Studies cited therein and related research consistently show a 60–80% reduction in suicide risk among spiritually engaged individuals — in a broad, practical sense — with the protective factor operative across depression, grief, bereavement, and terminal illness. See also comparable meta-analyses: e.g. Dervic et al. (2004) in *American Journal of Psychiatry*; Kleiman and Liu (2014) in *Crisis*.

everything, though I was unwilling to renounce my **syncretism and anthropological-epistemic needs through the essay form**. As an amateur — literally as one who loves (*amare*) — I have always been more interested in the fields that concern existential importance than in the merely scholastic and mathematical. On the other hand, whilst fasting helped me, I also lacked the relaxation of moderate alcohol, sexual freedom, and the rest. What one side forbids the other, I have always seen as the balance missing from my whole being. But that eclectic style of living and thinking is not a "betrayal" of one side or a lukewarm compromise — it is "purchasing" health and peace so as to save the other "benefits and missions" of one's being and life.

These statistics and this science move in a direction where even the brain's "illusions" are seen to contribute to its health. The brain is a material thing, but a human being and consciousness are not pure matter. If the brain "loves" illusions and is not fully understood — and may have an infinite number of operational combinations — then "illusions" are perhaps often the very foundation of material and spiritual science alike. For the further history goes, the more immaterial phenomena and *noumena* appear to alter even material laws. The Libet regularity itself rests on the idea that consciousness can be fully measured by reactions in specific regions of the brain or the hypothalamus — but it does not account for the fact that consciousness and will are both temporally and substantially wider, and *precede* measurability and cerebral reaction.²⁰ Will may be "faster" than we think; and our freedom does not lie only in the "veto" — just as commands and laws (divine or state) are not merely prohibitions and

²⁰ **Benjamin Libet's** experiments (1983, *Brain*) showed that the readiness potential in the motor cortex precedes the conscious decision to move by approximately 350 milliseconds, suggesting that neural preparation begins before conscious awareness. The standard interpretation has been used to argue against free will. The author contests this reading on the grounds that: (a) Libet himself allowed for a "veto" function of consciousness; (b) the experiments measure only the moment of motor initiation, not the much earlier voluntary orienting of attention and intention; and (c) predictive processing frameworks (Friston et al.) suggest consciousness acts not as initiator but as top-down constraint on action. The compatibility of neural determinism with existential freedom is argued in the philosophical chapter.

punishments but the purposiveness of the order of life. The key question remains: is our life *"a desire for struggle and success"* or *"a desire for meaning"*?

MY BEAUTIFUL AND TROUBLING ENCOUNTER WITH A POLISH WOMAN

When I travelled to Poland, I met a pleasant woman; everyone was welcoming. She showed me parks and landmarks. But when she saw that I was going further to Auschwitz and to film, she grew deeply saddened by my motive for coming. The small town of Oświęcim is in fact beautiful — a beautiful contradiction to that horror. She said it was "not good" — meaning the camp, and meaning my going — and asked why I was going there. When I explained my motives and said that we are all unpredictable and frail human beings, she told me that her father had worked there during the war, cleaning the crematoria after the corpses, because he lived nearby. She said this as if describing part of a normal, if unpleasant, job. And when she returned to "That is not good," she said it about the camp itself — almost as though I, the foreigner, might not realise what the place had been, or were taking it for granted. The critic *Rosandić* once noted how evil was practically "institutionalised" in the 20th century. Her father had looked at it as work — not in the way genocide was processed as work by its architects, but as someone who had accepted the role of cleaner and grown accustomed to it. Frankl himself once said he sat on a corpse whilst looking at the landscape. Evil and death were at that time close and normal enough to be accepted as normal. That bureaucratisation of the spirit is, on one side, survival for all; on the other, something most horrifying. It is the banality of evil at the level of the individual: not whether what one does is right or wrong, but whether one *feels* that one is simply doing one's job.

What stunned me there? Not the horror of the town and the camp, but the apparent beauty of those buildings and the normality of life beside so great a camp. Children going to a shop and rejoicing; tourists entering the

camp as an attraction, the February sun on facades so similar to and yet different from our continental style. That horrified me. She then asked: "Why do you think those buildings are still standing?" I answered: to show people what must never be repeated. "No — because you only need to turn on the electricity." She then explained — in Polish, which I partially understand — that she believed the infrastructure had been deliberately left so that the light could be switched on and new groups interned there again one day. This is not so mad as it sounds: Oleg **Mandić**, our last survivor at 95, has said something similar. I considered it an exaggeration and replied that anything is possible when hunger comes. "What hunger?" she said. "Not even hunger is needed — they have left enough that food alone will not stop them." She had identified a terrible diagnosis that had also occurred to me. Only after the Pandemic and the earthquake had the time of empty or false humanism in international relations been used to begin new wars and bloc divisions and inflations. I was unwilling to be yet more radical and say even to myself: We never really left the camp. Even now when we enjoy what looks like freedom outside it, we do not enjoy it as we should. Why we never left — and why that is not a path towards depression but towards an exit — is what I explain in this book. Therefore my theses could be checked against the original books from my grandfather's legendary shelf: **Erich Fromm** and his mentor and sociologist **Thomas Bottomore** — specifically *The Sane Society*, *Escape from Freedom*, and *Elites and Society*. Old but not outdated.

FURTHER ON PRE-PSYCHOLOGY

Fromm rightly cites **Spinoza**: mental disorders — not only as stigma — have today reached the level of "virtue". And defect is not really in mental instability but in *greed and abnormal ambition* — which is also seen as a "virtue" from the other side of the vessel. Everything is full of virtues today. The only thing that is not a virtue is breaking the law — and even that is sometimes a "heroic act". Fromm's diagnosis: suicide is the *most complex* indicator precisely because no single factor suffices as its cause; a high rate

signals not material poverty but *a deficit of mental stability and mental health in society as such*.²¹ From that time the statistics of rich and poor countries have changed — but there have always been surprising differences. Fromm was strongly opposed to *sexual instincts and the death drive* as the basic guides that Freud takes as sacred. But that factor is not to be dismissed either, and the question is whether modern society is simply the *management of basic instincts*. His painful equation of *imbalance* between biological and social need is this: biological instincts are better for the individual but not for society, and the human being is a social creature and therefore not even for the individual in isolation. But rarely are all needs satisfied simultaneously — biological, social, and spiritual.

Fromm identifies four core social needs:

- *relatedness, b) creativity, c) rootedness and belonging, d) identity and meaning. Here we arrive at the simultaneous freedom and flight from freedom of ourselves.*

These are beautiful discoveries — his and mine — because they overlap at least in the experience of observing myself and the environment through rather less than half a century of life. The solution lies in consciousness more than in formula. For the central question is: let us set aside all norms and reasons and place ourselves in one hypothetical situation:

- We have the possibility of power or punishment over anyone who troubles us or threatens our identity and life
- We have the possibility of sexual relations with whomever we wish

²¹ **Erich Fromm**, *The Sane Society* (Rinehart, 1955); *Escape from Freedom* (Farrar & Rinehart, 1941). Thomas Bottomore, *Elites and Society* (Basic Books, 1964). Fromm identifies four core social needs — relatedness, creativity, rootedness and belonging, identity and meaning — as the psychosocial substrate of mental health, and argues that modern industrial society systematically frustrates all four. Suicide he regards as the most complex indicator precisely because no single factor suffices as its cause; a high rate signals a societal, not merely an individual, pathology. Bottomore, following Michels' "iron law of oligarchy", argues that elites are not conspiracy but process: every counter-elite from below becomes, over time, a new elite from above, making permanent structural vigilance rather than permanent revolution the only realistic corrective.

Let us completely remove the *superego*, values, laws, God, feeling, upbringing, and the reasons of the other party. Let us remain in a *vacuum* in which everything is isolated, no one would ever know — not even we ourselves — and we would have no consequences, and are forbidden even to *think* about the act and its morality. Provoked (nervous, offended, under stress, in need — it does not matter) and with the full possibility of reacting freely as we *could and would* — at least by the first Frankfurtian desire. With constant pressure: the needs and drives are growing, and there is no escape from the object of what provokes our deepest reactions.

Answer for yourselves. Would you in that situation follow the drive? I have often posed such borderline questions — as in my written work on compulsion in war — and said at least honestly: "*I do not know*" what I would do, since I was not in it. But I know that the drive for self-preservation would pull first, then all the predictions and controls. The fewest such answers I received in a survey. Not all would act *equally* — we have asexual people, different orientations, those from cultures where cannibalism or incest is normal and smoking is not. But if we take the average of all from our culture and of my approximate generation, mixed across all groups and educations and workplaces and faiths, I am convinced the result would be staggeringly similar.

Fromm says that madness in twos can be "madness in millions". We all want to be different and yet we remain a herd, and never know which forces from this and the other world govern and oversee us. The *love of creation, reason, and work* is propagated by socialist and modern psychologists, clergy, and scientists alike. It is an unquestionable formula. But why do I work harder for free on this book than I could even enjoy in a large hourly wage? Or when I do enjoy something, I enjoy it regardless of pay. How to solve this problem — that neither external nor internal compulsion exists, and how to make a human being love their life, work, society, and meaning — is something that hundreds of books have no answer to.

Today's eclecticism takes from everywhere what suits it and goes to the end in nothing. We are too obsessed with moral questions — and precisely in psychology and ontology as *pseudo*².

SYNCHRONICITY OR MORPHOGENETIC FIELDS? — SHELDRAKE AND JUNG

I have often asked myself whether it is coincidence that we encounter, collaborate with, or exchange impressions with persons of similar values, activities, or interests — even when it looks "accidental" and subjective. So I have met many singers, actors, sportspeople, and scientists in what seemed chance intersections. Even where the person is not always what their work is — in the end only a human being — this happened often. Both the giving and receiving were usually with mutual respect. If I were not being pathetic: some people passively made my life important and rich in hard moments, and they are glad to hear this. I remain part of their active life and image of life, and that encounter is both an honour and a reciprocity.²² That shared *namjera* — intention — in quality, taste, the common good, and the sense of connection across many subjective and objective interpretations, is the only true wealth and proof that we are all connected. This we can later connect to my philosophy of Observation and the position that it is not mere coincidence or simple attraction and movement along the same paths — because those paths are sometimes different, yet the logic or values coincide more intimately with an unknown person than with a known one.

²²Rupert **Sheldrake**, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature* (Collins, 1988). C. G. Jung, "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle" [1952], in *The Collected Works*, vol. 8. Both concepts are cited here as phenomenological observations rather than established science: the author notes the pattern — shared values and sensibilities producing meaningful encounter across distance and difference — and declines to reduce it to coincidence without claiming metaphysical proof.

LIFE AND DEATH IN THE LIVING — THE EXAMPLE OF THE WALKING "AURA"

Love — worn as a term and multiple in meaning — is again central. Not only love of peace, sleep, lesser resistance, utopia, the past, people, work, family, things, evil, pleasure... But love of *life against love of death*. In depression I noticed — **love of that feeling** but not love of the consequence and the taking of one's own freedom. In suicidality I noticed that love of life is in fact stronger than love of death. That is fiction and paradox. But everything is invested in the opposite direction — contrary to life — because one hopes for either *a new life or death as nothingness* and as a message to the world. The problem: what if something of that is not as we imagined? If there is no nothingness and we are not programmed for nothingness — because love is good and alive and positive, as is the experience of love or "fate" — then we cannot be against our own being or against the good as such. If there is an afterlife, and it is not as we imagined, only then do we see that we are attempting the impossible: that is the eternal anxiety and the wounding of those around us. We spread fear instead of strength. This is not punishment — it is conscious resistance to a natural law and an irreversible state. By irreversible I do not mean irreparable, but severely damaged.

Because if suicidal persons were asked: *Do you want to live — happily?* Probably 99% or 100% would say — yes. If they did not say so, their being might think it subconsciously. We are not even in the position of "angels" to protest against our own reality — our consciousness and ignorance are so vast that will is highly impure, and changes, and does not know the future in which it forms itself to the end. But it is not without responsibility. For if a pure lover of death is asked: *What is death?* They would say: the negation of life, the negation of me, or zero. Something like: "I do not wish to marvel at the fact that I am in myself a miracle." Although that would be the only argument — the problem is this: *you are you! That is already done.* You can only protest in vain. What does "you are you" mean? A blend of all times or the last version? That is hard for me to say. But we are "good". "Good"

cannot wish to be something else — it can only try something. What is our image of our own personality? Later on generals, animals and „aura“ more.

I will include photographs. The left is a picture of my paternal grandmother in her youth and prime — not without hidden flaws and traits of mild autism, full of pedagogy, humanity, and detail, with little theory and synthesis. The right is that same person at the moment of death: distorted, old, in a strange contraction, in the repellent aesthetic, bewilderment, and considerable "fallen spirit". The question: who is she? One, the other, or everything? In my view everything — and the best of everything, if we wish it and if she herself wished it and if God wishes it. There is no other. The third photograph is of Saint Bernadette the visionary. Regardless of beliefs, the image of the preserved body — though scientific explanations exist — leaves that 10% unexplained, as with Saint Rita; and, more importantly, the *serene* expression on the face in her harder death and life. My paternal grandmother had, in fact, a "royal death" — a room and attendants. But she did not have *herself* — neither in reason nor in spirit.





THE „RORSCHACH“ TEST OF THE BOOK

Love as a worn and multiple term is again the key. I cannot hide that my writing is not only for my own development or for others' but for participation in society, regardless of the scope. Fromm cites **Sullivan** — they show that a human being is not a personality unto itself but through *interpersonality*. Therefore *love* is something that surpasses simple selfishness by wanting for the other what it wants for itself — whether security, satisfaction, peace, or any altruistic and egoistic category. A person must not be "goods" on the market of personalities, nor must anxiety drive them into any flight. My book will seek to show that anxiety is itself a misperception, shaped by both individuals and society. Liberation from anxiety is liberation of our lives and our relationships in the human race — it need not depend on one single faith or one psychological or philosophical direction. Sullivan goes further and says that anxiety is not the greatest problem — loneliness is. There I fortunately have an easy answer: merely by being among people — even in a trench, a prison, a hospital, a school — we are not alone and we have some identity and belonging. The problem is placing ourselves and others in the right place. Are we more alienated now than before the transition and the digital world? I would not say the problem is there, or that the answer is one. I feel neither more nor

less lonely or anxious because of those changes — but because of changes that have *stripped bare* society and myself in all their advantages and flaws.

The fragmentation effects on this book are always in question — but the effect is certainly present; only what each person will recognise:

- ▶ For some it will represent *no interest* at all, only subconscious
- ▶ For some it will appear only *superficially profound*
- ▶ Some will think it is all *copied from school and boring*
- ▶ Some will find *traces of at least one irrepeatable sentence* and consider the rest worthless
- ▶ Some will see only the orthographic chaos or confused style — the *form*
- ▶ Some will see the general *spirit* and content, *authenticity and honesty*
- ▶ Some it will affect *actively* — positively or negatively, even beyond my intention; some *passively*; some *not at all*

THE PHENOMENON OF THE TITANIC AND THE INVISIBLE

I name this phenomenon after the famous steamship because the Titanic sank — but the other side of that is that it showed heroic resilience, not only systemic failure, and "secured" far better conditions afterwards than those that preceded it. Their sacrifice is therefore not futile; that is how I look at it. Who watching the film *Titanic* thinks about the fact that after the Titanic approximately **2,000,000 crossings** were made successfully — and incidents numbered only around 10? That is **0.005%** approximately. Of course even that is significant — not "negligible" — but the outcome is strikingly positive already in this world, let alone in the transcendental values of the meeting of life and death, love and error, sacrifice and arrogance, the small and the great, work and success. And of the film's success, interests, and message we need not speak. It is as if one said about our nation that 20 people had died or perished in 100 years, and 4 million survived. Everyone would wave it away.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PARADOX OF PSYCHOPATHY AND THE CULT OF "EMPATHY"

Many works, including this one, are oriented towards some form of *empathy* — towards society, towards oneself, towards those who are suicidal. I have said elsewhere that even dehumanisation begins first with a positive attitude or positive (true or false) presupposition. Only then comes the negation. Empathy has itself become an absolute open to questioning. Is the problem in emotional functioning or precisely in the intellectual and volitional? Empathy towards those who inflict pain is sometimes even called "*secondary victimisation*" rather than liberation and a wider picture. Empathy (empty) as a norm is often the "luxury of the stronger" and a missed target — because it is not important whether we *feel* the pain of others but *whether we want to, and why*. **Desensitisation and habituation** towards apathy actually happen faster in normal persons than in psychopaths — as a defensive mechanism. Especially in the digital age. We then arrive on the same branch as them, and injustice in the world is often an "justification" for psychopathology, not only their "opportunism".

Psychopaths are right about everything except the general moral and natural law — which is already almost otherworldly to prove. This world is often exactly a selfish struggle for survival that enables the persistence of systems like capitalism, as much as human cooperation does. That is why socialist sociologists and economists were wrong that "capitalism will collapse at its peak." Our survival can sometimes be through such sublimations as this or through art. But I cannot deny that almost everything — including this book — is **Nietzsche's herd morality**: becoming an observer of life instead of an active participant. That is not a worse position, but whilst in psychopaths a biological "protection" of their intention is often imposed in the brain, in us it is often *hypocritical*. We often have only the *brake* — but our desire is not cancelled, only suppressed. Not only the desire for the disappearance of something from our inner or outer world — we even have enjoyment in the process. Psychopaths are the stripped-back other side of truth.

When my wife once asked a doctor why they did not introduce "injections" to euthanise the evil population of the world, she received a diagnosis of schizophrenia. Yet her logic and desire for human purity is not *a priori* "bad". Is not the prison system one form of such injection? The Nazi perpetrators often wrote that they knew their own heads would roll on the floor if they were victims rather than in power. Through the humiliation of opponents, a psychopathic person only wants to bring the same to weakness and collapse — which will show how hypocritical and selfish and weak they are. But even then that is only the victim's reaction under pain. Afterwards they will either think as before or be broken; it is only a matter of momentary conviction about what is true. When someone says "*Forgive me*" they are often committing *violence* — they mean: *Release me from the moral and legal burden so I can return to my selfishness. I have now done my part, and you are now obliged to forgive me, otherwise you are imperfect.* The **Milgram experiment** proved in controlled conditions that **65% of people** choose their own *safety* over inflicting pain on others; the realistic percentage in uncontrolled conditions would be closer to 90%.²³ In ordinary conditions, a human being is not a creature that always chooses and admires evil — that has been proved in studies of children — but in this world selfish interests are simply overcapacitated. The person is too focused on survival, too little on the genuine fusion of life and being. Though "normal" humanity gains in this way a supra-average value — which is a beautiful effect — it is wrong because it should have been simply normal.

²³ According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics (Državni zavod za statistiku), the 35–44 age cohort (core Millennials born roughly 1980–1990) accounted for roughly 6.8% of Croatia's total population at the 2021 census I said. The cohort shrank sharply after EU accession in 2013, when emigration accelerated. By 2024 Croatia's total population had fallen to approximately 3.88 million (UN World Population Prospects, 2024 Revision).

SYNCHRONICITY IN THE FATHER FIGURE, FROMM AND BOTTOMORE...

Social disintegration of the middle class includes precisely the phenomenon of the *loss of the father's authority* — and this is a problem that also troubled me before any thought of suicide and before the divorce: that troubled all of us who have emotionally charged relations with our fathers, whether through grief, conflict, competition, or idealisation. If we ourselves want to be fathers, or are fathers, we feel a responsibility that for inexplicable reasons we cannot fulfil. It is not hard to get up two hours earlier or go to bed later — it is hard to know where to get up, how, and why, so that we remain healthy and free whilst family and society are satisfied. **Bottomore** researched the question of elites and the "iron law of oligarchy" — concluding that *every elite that rises "from below" becomes in time a new elite "from above"* — and that the dictatorship of any proletariat is bad not because it existed but *because it never really existed*.²⁴

Fromm's conclusion on inner freedom: the *lack of inner freedom* and "insignificance" and suffocation are the fertile ground for *fascism* — not external oppression, which is often a half-lie. I would add that complete inner personal freedom is what protects us from our own fanaticism and fascism in autodestructiveness. Today autodestructiveness is far more dangerous than destructiveness — which is largely prevented and rare in Croatia. But the feeling of "heaviness" exists sometimes more than even in the building of a state. Not from fear of war, but from the loss of spiritual freedom which is the final goal. Everyone does this wrong because they see only individual problems and not the general one. Little more about „Aura“.

When I was at the seaside after 10 years from the first spiritual trip with my first wife to Drivenik in 2020 — to bear the grief and the wish to remain faithful to her until death — I sat with an *Istrian soldier* who had liberated the barracks below my house on Maksimirska. He had passed through

²⁴K. R. **Joiner**, *Why People Die by Suicide* (Harvard University Press, 2005). Joiner identifies acquired capability — the habituated reduction of fear of pain and death — as a key factor distinguishing ideation from attempt.

everything. I saw he was not lying. He was that typical soldier: thin, shy, exhausted, without hatred, aggression, or physical bulk. As with Petar Janjić. He told me of a foreign general who came to Sarajevo or Banja Luka — where my paternal grandmother's sister, my great-aunt, lived. She was not expelled, as another great-aunt had been from Knin, but was psychologically "maltreated". Like most voluntary contingents, that UN general who met **Mladić** had no military power. But he had authority. All the foreign soldiers saluted when he arrived — him alone. Mladić asked: "Who is that, that everyone salutes?" They explained: someone with a great record of participation and training with the French Legion or another. After that Mladić himself addressed him as "*Gospodine generale*" — "General, sir" — though Mladić was physically more powerful than almost any of them for most of the war. That is the effect. It cannot be bought overnight. The complete opposite of this was the footage of H. Torlak and Mladić near Žepa: the coughing, the "calm", and the offering of a beer "to a man" — betraying the aura of a completely powerless and insecure man who does not know in whose name he is even negotiating, let alone that he himself is any authority. Since Torlak survived, he had perhaps crossed the "lower threshold of irrelevance". Avdo Palić — the hero of Žepa — and neutral Hajrić — as a „loser“ paid with his head for the frustration of those who had captured him. When the threat was made "you are not in a position to ask", a new game opened. At the end, **my father too** was — like my grandfather — a winner in war and youth, and a near-total loser in peace and old age.

THE GUIDANCE OF "HEROES AND MORTALS"

Coming back to **Petar Janjić**. A hero who survived the camp — though he also boasted to me when selling his book how they had used a sniper on those who surrendered from a transporter or tank. He had left, I saw, a part of himself on the battlefield. As if I was looking at half a man. So frail, small, yet gentle — not evil or boastful like the arrogant people behind keyboards and ballot papers. I wanted to read his book. I was surprised. A book with so many correct sentences — neater than mine, since he had been to

gymnasium. With so much logic and humanity, I read it with pleasure whilst guarding a parking barrier at the seaside where people wanted to "kill" me for a free spot.

He and his comrade lay together waiting for the transfer from the JNA to the camp. The other man was holding a grenade to throw under them both. But they decided — they wanted to live. And he was condemned to the worst: drilling his leg, twisting, maltreatment, false displays of normality to observers. But he also saw a kind of order even in those prison and hospital circles. He decided that precisely by *worsening his wounds and their smell* he would gain the opportunity to move a little at a time. The wound and the stench became his best friends. He did not lose the will to live and was exchanged. It was an extraordinary honour to have been any part of his life, though in 1991 I was a child and wanted only to see again the haystacks and the shadows of my maternal grandmother's village, Vrpolje.

I asked him: "Who will give that back to you?" He answered: "My children and my wife." Often people glorify only their children or their state — but he saw here the final meaning. And when I said: "If I had been with you I would not have helped. I probably would have died, and that is that — no great loss that I was not." He answered with complete confidence: "*You would not have! If it is not fated for you — you would not have!*" I could not believe what I was hearing — I believed in defeatism and my own weakness. But I had received the best compliment. Not because he wanted to say: "You are taller, younger, stronger, smarter, more humane, or God is on your side." He said the secret of life implicitly:

You do not know. Perhaps you will not. You do not know God's plan for you, or your own luck and strength. And do not try to know — but do not think you will not. Perhaps you will, as I did, survive in order to write, to bear witness, to meet small unimportant people like me or you who will gain the most precious empiria of life and death.

I had just returned from a barefoot pilgrimage from my birthplace towards Sinj — where local women had admired me — and I, as a "great hero", had quit halfway because the pain of the concrete and the heat on

bare feet was unbearable, however much I pushed the placebo. But perhaps heroes too "only reached halfway" — and the other half, life carried them forward, smiling. As I was carried — when insulted and fleeing from jobs — on a tractor by unknown benefactors...

"IT WAS ALL ONLY A DREAM"

These are the words of the film and of the statement of the mother of the late French-Croatian defender of Vukovar, **Jean-Michel Nicolier**. I also saw that the body "defends" itself against this world and its subjective effort through sleep — a reality in which everything is real but is not "heavy" or painful. My paternal grandmother, before her death, slept for two days at a time and would not let herself be woken. She kept saying she did not know where she was or what was real. But the "bed pulled her" — as it pulled me in some of my student years. Because the brain goes where things are easier. That is why that mother too sees her son in dreams — and my wife often talks to her mother in that safe zone where death does not exist or where death and life overlap. That is where one lives in a "temporary suicide" or *limbo* in this world, regardless of what Freud thinks of the unconscious. The simple recipes for returning to life are often: exercise, work, prayer, nature, small pleasures. When I could not study, my grandfather said: "Go and just learn five pages today." When we had gone through them we celebrated as though I had graduated. And the remaining 450 pages of Roman law were still there... But I passed it. By decision — when something in your head says: *"Pull yourself together now, a little."* Sleep can also be a remedy and „curse“.

PLACEBO — NOCEBO

The problem of consciousness and free will is something we approach in steps: not a secret that it is simultaneously a pseudo-problem, a neurological problem, a circumstantial problem, and a genetic or

biological one. Not always in the same order or combination, but around the same principle. Every placebo creates an effect that amplifies depression, suicidality, and anxiety. Positive stress keeps a person healthy. The question is of measure. When I received tablets in Jankomir, I refused to "absorb" them — not only in the sense of hiding them under the tongue or spitting them out, but through fear of them I exercised and kept my spirit in a state where I did not feel their effect, because I judged — and apparently proved — that I did not need them or they did not suit me. But I did not refuse every form of therapy, especially when I saw that the GAP had become a bodily dysfunction too. Rivotril then suited me to act to some degree — but I saw again that even what is good can have side effects and habituation and abstinence crises, which the medical profession has also confirmed.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY AS INTERWOVEN CONCEPTS AND PHENOMENA

ANXIETY AS THE OTHER (MY) SIDE OF THE COIN OF DEPRESSION

Anxiety as a disorder under the heading "miscellaneous" or generalised — the sum of acute recurrent phases — is something I came to in my 38th year, and it lasted months: relatively longer than the other problems I had "faced". The reasons are clear: exposure to stress, to nocturnal exertion, to anything; the result of an already accumulated amortisation from study, work, idleness, trauma, joy, time. But what anxiety really is, is the real feeling that peace is an *illusion*, whilst struggle, unrest, and consciousness are everywhere, in past and future. The cold wound hurts the most. Anxiety is not only a pre-state but also PTSD. The effect is threefold, because the sense of the present, which is in fact still good, is corrupted and lost.

With it, the awareness of mortality grows — first of the generation we know, then of our own, then of the Heideggerian *anxiety of return* to

nothingness. The afternoon of life — the horizon of seeing ourselves between those ahead and those behind, digital and analogue — is a weight and a not-being-understood by everyone. Add the sense of responsibility and meaning that we wanted but for which we were not prepared, or for which we were empirically over-protected and directed only towards theoretical and conventional prediction of life's trends. When I became a teacher, more was expected of me than I had myself received in school — empirical and developmental pedagogy, which one does not learn in one's twenties.

Anxiety manifested itself first in mild ways:

- Through the *fear* of going to school, where I spent whole days thinking about the bully and that mass of people. I was constantly sweating, sometimes fled the lesson, cut myself on glass. The first fear I had was when I heard the air-raid siren and was alone without my mother in nursery. In general I was afraid of socialising, even though it was good for me.
- Through a mild *shock*. When my first wife's father ended up in the hospital at Rebro, I saw chronic patients for the first time. He told me there was a young man there who has to have his intestine operated on every two years because it kept shortening — and have rods implanted. I looked through the door and saw him: pale, devoid of emotion either positive or negative, lying with his bare belly full of rods, helpless but calm. He even moved a little, looking at himself. When as a small boy I had a hernia operation, what I most hated was that with a fresh wound and bad stitches I had to get up to eat bad eggs or push myself to the toilet — and that taught me to see reality and powerlessness. But I was brave when my family had to leave me, even though it was double stress. I saw how unreal the world we live in is. They say everyone should at least once visit a heavier hospital ward. In the psychiatric ward I always said how surprised I was that there were not many "sick" people there. I remembered my tonsillectomy at Jordanovac. I remembered waiting

in line for the operation with other children without any fear. How I helped the younger ones giving them tea and consoling them. The nurses came in nervously and asked what we were doing — we joked the light had already been on. After the operation, when I vomited, one of them brusquely asked: "Why did you vomit on the floor? Tell me." I tried to answer that it was not deliberate, that the old anaesthetic had set it off, that I would clean it. But I could not even speak. It does not matter. I remembered the boy beside me in war-time hospital who was waiting for an operation and the turn never came. I remembered the teddy bear my father and I had looked at. I remembered the late Dr Filipušić and that afternoon sun, and my father carrying me wrapped in a blanket from the car. The war news ran day and night and again the fear of the hospital being bombed; a nurse had tried to deceive me by saying I was going for an "X-ray". But we children of the millennium had no fear yet. The brain was innocent but adaptable. I remembered the tall writer Krilić, who used to come to my grandmother for lessons, and the book I read as a child: *Forbidden Doors*. "Sister Gestapo..." Do I miss that time? I could not believe that the greatest warmth was hidden in the coldest places, and that life in freedom is in fear both of freedom itself and of returning to such places. That is when anxiety in the classical sense was born: I do not wish to be in any place — and I regret being in both. I thought: if people only knew how patiently that young man bears his diseased intestine. If only I could take half his pain. But one thing is "the desire for suffering" — another is suffering. The question left in my head: *who is sick and aware — he, or we who are outside and healthy and disordered?*

- The *third anxiety* — the clinical one — happened as *tension* when, fleeing from the fire at the seaside, the calls, my own wishes, and the constant fear of my father's deterioration, I began playing online chess. I did not realise I had overloaded the *amygdala* through long nocturnal escape. I felt the same on long pilgrimages. It is the

mental "spleen", as it were.²⁵ But I also sensed that the culmination was coming. I did not yet know that my father had heart disease too. Emergency services kept arriving. My mother would not even tell me what was happening or that it was a hereditary, slow-killing disease for which I have a 50–50 chance of having inherited it from him — autosomal SCA1 ataxia.²⁶ Little is known about it; only about 3 per 100,000 patients have it. Few mutated genes, probably with interruptions, and it manifested late because in my grandfather it never showed beyond a mild stiffness. But it is the heaviest and incurable type of cerebellar and brainstem degeneration — the centre for the coordination control, which finally affects breathing and swallowing; he has already signed with me that he will not continue to live on tubes and aggressive respirators. Exercise both helps him and harms him. Through this I first felt that psychiatric, or at least neurological, illnesses can have not merely invisible but *organic* consequences — fortunately, not in my case organic but physiological. I felt chest pain and muscle pain. I thought I was having a heart attack and that I would be lucky to reach hospital. Before that I had hiccupped for 12 hours without stopping; my teeth and gums ached; I had a mild tremor; and on the medication, a problem with breathing — dyspnoea. I "skipped" breathing and swallowing at times. I was frightened, which deepened the anxiety that feeds on itself. I could not work. I tried breathing exercises and

²⁵NIH / SAMHSA data consistently show approximately 7 ideations for every 1 attempt, and roughly 25 attempts for every 1 death (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States, 2022; CDC WISQARS, 2023). The 80% announcement rate figure aligns with WHO data cited by the Croatian Public Health Institute (HZJZ).

²⁶Almost universally: "I knew it was a mistake the moment I let go." Ken Baldwin (1985 survivor) and Kevin Hines (2000 survivor) are among the most cited. Hines: "The millisecond my hands left the rail, it was instant regret." See also: D. H. Rosen, "Suicide Survivors: A Follow-up Study", *Western Journal of Medicine* 122 (1975). The survival rate from a Golden Gate jump is approximately 2%; a barrier completed in January 2024 reduced annual fatalities from a long-term average of ~33 to 8 in 2024, and to near zero in the second half of 2025.

everything but first I needed a result. Mercifully, the result was clear as far as the heart was concerned. Or so it reads. The amygdala creates an illusion of organic pain where there is none, because of constant *fight-or-flight* readiness. This lasted for months. The culmination came when, beside my father who can barely walk, I sank and crawled. "Dad, Mum, help me..." I cried out at 38. He pushed me away — apathetic, not deliberately — and said: "I cannot even help myself, let alone you." My mother fled outside. I knew I must not leave my family, wife, dog, and grandmother at that time. Not even walks and running helped. In Maksimir I felt I would die. Then I was on my knees, like a fellow waiter who once instructed me in life experience and said the same had happened to him after divorce — he would have wagered his arm it would not. I thought the same. But after redundancy, hospital, my grandfather's death, and the divorce, I went through it even with better baseline. Unlike him I did not "tear off the ring" — I even wore it for a time, not as an amulet but as a reminder of the past and of my own continuity. And I could not get up that afternoon. Then I simply said to myself: "It is over, I am collapsing. I must try to stand and check whether I really have collapsed or not. I can easily return to the floor." And I stood. It was not easier. But I saw I was standing. I reckoned I did not know how much will I had, but I had some, and I would try to walk. I took a few steps and — astonishingly — did not fall. Then I began to believe that this picture of fear and vertigo is actually false. It convinces me that all is well — for if I had a real cardiac problem alongside it I would probably have seized up. From the other side, I am curious and I do not like being in the unknown. But at this point it is better not to know more than I do now... It hurts a little even as I write or cry. The cumulative and positive stress, and the armour, are proof of the body and brain's amortisation through the years. On the other side I am now developing the other, mid-life kind of *neuroplasticity* — but it takes time.

- *Sublimation* as the new *fourth phase* is painful, but consciousness of body and spirit is more than useful. Surprisingly, only a small minority of people are dissatisfied or in fear of death right before the end. Perhaps I am both lucky and unlucky to come from the heavier kind of family — though I have seen heavier. Before, my body listened to me, for good and ill. When I studied through the night, raged, gambled, I felt no consequences. Or when, out of obesity and out of spiritual aims — among other things for the sake of those who had killed themselves — I sacrificed certain goods, made pilgrimages, fasted, I had a surplus of energy to burn. Now I am not gaining weight, but I have no surplus either. I was always most moved by the cases that are pitiful and rejected — concretely the murderer or suicide whose act is only a brief manifesto of reality. I walked on foot to the "miraculous Madonna" in Varaždin and prayed for the soul of a murderer who took his own life and the lives of his children in Bosnia in order to harm his wife. It broke me to feel pity rather than anger. And I held that someone needed to pray even for such people, because it is not difficult to fall. I made a film about it. But I thought reciprocally — empathetically rather than retributively — like many others including, unfortunately, **Kant** in such situations. I do not agree with him even in my published thesis advocating the abolition of capital punishment — because I hold that punishment can be educative, but retribution, and certainly capital retribution, does not reduce evil, and abolishes the possibility of redemption in this life. That was not my only problem with him; his "rejection" of children born out of wedlock, his insistence on principle and imperative, and his outdated or racist theses make him slightly less dear to me than **Hegel** or Augustine — and Hegel too I criticise somewhat later. But on the whole their — partly Christian and broad — teachings I find appealing, as I do those of many **Calvinists**, which surprised me, since they are often *utilitarians* — which ought to be incompatible. But it is no secret, as with the Protestants, that the religious interest in this world and the

next is in fact to have *everything* — but to have what belongs to us or what we have earned, not what we have "stolen". What is important is that up there I prayed for those dead children but also for my future child. In fact I did "receive" a child, but in a perhaps strange manner. My present wife is older — though I do not feel it — and probably cannot conceive, though she hopes. But I prayed for a child for my first wife. I only do not know whether she named him Rafael as we had long planned, but I heard that their family is full of illness. I withdrew into a healthier and happier environment in the end.

(NON-)CLINICAL ANXIETY VS. DEPRESSION

Anxiety is on the other side a half-conscious *choosing of the quarter* — the quarter of the worst possibility, which does not in fact exist. There exists only its passingness or the eternal striving towards it and the *potential* — which I explain by the opposite example of senile depression or apathy. The latter not only leads to (premature) death but, I hold, continues after it, unlike anxiety which disappears once the final event occurs. The spirit either does not tire after death, or if it does, it goes under the judgement of the higher spirit. If it does not, that would mean that every act and state is without responsibility and consequence.

When people jump from a bridge, the suppressed energy is released and depression is turned into anxiety in a few seconds in the air. Depression does not pull you down as one thinks — it apparently *elevates* you and feeds you. And anxiety either blocks you or apparently pulls you down like a magnet, but actually wants to lift you and save you. Not out of pride — but because it says: "Look, the abyss really is down there." Workers who had neither depression nor anxiety walked "freely" between nets on high skyscrapers a hundred years ago and had the lowest accident rates! They were not madly brave — the abyss simply did not interest them.

Anxiety is for me a natural continuation of my (un)stability and maturity, and of old suicidality or recklessness. Instead of depression I now have a concrete *goal* — reduction of fear, reduction of disease through the natural death of the human being, sublimation of knowledge and experience, love of life. I have no suicidal ideation in the situations where I have most encountered death and the fear of death. So anxiety too is: love of life, but exaggerated and unrealistic at times, closed off to other possibilities. Twin sister to depression. What do I want in the end? I want a conditional and free eternity one day, without the classical freedom of choosing good or the privation of good which is evil. I want decision, body, spirit, and reason that can bear that out and create a framework within which I can freely operate but within that firm decision and firm world. I want a proper limitation of freedom which will give me freedom. And that is possible only after the Christian (or some other) resurrection. We want an end to syntheses and the beginning of catharsis — but we fear it too.

Before that, my depression went in the direction of *fatalism* — not the fatalism Heidegger sees, and partly the believers, of being aware of the necessity of death and of the wall of one's own nature, but eternal guilt, eternal meaninglessness, eternal death in various variants. I had neither luck nor joy. So I am still an *existential fatalist, Christian, and eclectic* in that dialectical and synthetic or syncretist orientation from the relative to the absolute, or to hope. But I am no longer — a pessimist. I do not look at the world realistically and proactively as **Sartre** did, with the same *Nausea* in the stomach and the perception of the ugly. Nor am I a perpetual optimist who breaks all rules. Why then anxiety? Before I explain, I will conclude nihilistically in the style of **Albert Camus**: "Why should we not live in spite of life?" Suffering is often just a screen today. But a firm position is good — even in the case of Laura Henkel, who relatively healthy ended her life before her family at the new Pegasos clinic in Switzerland, with cameras present. Or the case of **Cathy Kassenoff** — who reportedly from "spite" over loss of custody of her children and a complicated divorce went for

assisted suicide.²⁷ A breast-cancer diagnosis was present, but reportedly in remission. About that I made my own hybrid documentary with the well-known actors Zijad Gračić and Kristina Krepela, following through it the worries of actors with the years and the gap between generations. That film was rated lower than my film on the philosophy of evil; I will only sketch the legal problems here without dwelling on the basic profession, having spoken about that in videos.

THE "TURIN HORSE"

What in the end is anxiety? In my view it is also love of life — but not "perverted" as Aquinas would put it, *not too little*, greedy, disordered, or compressed into the lie or half-truth of depression, *Nausea*, and the possible blackness of death and pain. It is ***exaggerated love and a "too small" soul*** — as when Nietzsche ran after a horse, embraced it to defend it from the man beating it, and collapsed into a trance from which he never recovered.²⁸ At the meeting with immorality and the exhaustion of his own resources, his last words were reportedly: "Mother, I am stupid!" When I

²⁷ Catherine ("Cathy") Kassenoff (1968–2023), former federal prosecutor and special counsel to the New York Governor, ended her life by assisted suicide in Switzerland on 27 May 2023 amidst a contested four-year custody dispute. A terminal-cancer diagnosis was present but her own suicide note framed the loss of custody, rather than the cancer, as the decisive cause. The Höss case is referenced in the same chapter as a separate phenomenon: a death cited by Bartul Marušić from a documentary about the Pegasos clinic in Switzerland, where another person, Laura Henkel, also ended her life on camera with relatives present. Both cases are deployed in the chapter not as endorsements but as illustrations of the distinction between terminal somatic illness and "existential" assisted suicide. T. Joiner, *Why People Die by Suicide* (Harvard, 2005), proposes the three-factor model: perceived burdensomeness, thwarted belongingness, and acquired capability for self-harm.

²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche's collapse in Turin on 3 January 1889, when he reportedly threw his arms around the neck of a horse being beaten in the Piazza Carlo Alberto, has been the subject of much medical debate (syphilitic general paresis is one hypothesis; CADASIL, frontotemporal dementia, and brain tumour have all been proposed). The "Mother, I am stupid" remark is variously attributed. The author treats the moment phenomenologically — as the meeting of an ethical demand the body could no longer carry — rather than reducing it to any one diagnosis.

am anxious, I want everything: return to the old, pleasures, helping others, death, spirit and body — to resolve everything, to flee everything, to be in everything. That is too much for a person. It is not the path of Francis of Assisi: "Brother wolf — brother horse — brother flogger." It is the attempt at personal influence on the order and on beings. Not flight as escape from the greater evil — but influence, "running before the cart". Not the fanatical, mad, uninformed outburst — simply the *exaggerated original*. Exaggeratedly realistic in all components of one's being. It is like the second phase of the "dark night" of *St John of the Cross* — where we do not yet look upon the beyond, but see all that is here and a window onward.

It is the final state before clinical or complete death, or the return to the old and peace after the event passes. I did not mourn too much, neither too little, I am not over-traumatised, nor have I seen the meaninglessness of everything and the guilt — quite the contrary. My innocence is not now broken; it was broken at the first sight of debauchery, violence, or injustice of this world and television, to which many become accustomed. My innocence is perhaps slowly being *renewed*. But through a painful process of inverse birth. A process that has an end, but is hard because of myself: because of the conflict of inertia and will. In suicidality, inertia and will overlap. In anxiety they move in opposite directions. Unlike myself when I was not yet awake — or my grandmother, who was not awake — I have become "too awake" both physically and psychologically. This is not copied from the internet; this is lived. I do not in fact want death — I refuse it or fear it. And I am the same person, only more real and more unreal. That is why anxiety is sometimes a harder path of recovery, when the wrong conditions converge.

RETURN FROM ANXIETY TO DEPRESSION — DEPRESSION—ANXIETY—DEPRESSION

As I have seen it, depression often begins first or simultaneously with anxiety. In anxiety there is, on the other hand, the possibility of a path to liberation, as I now somehow feel it, or a path to stagnation and ultimately a return to depression or suicidality. Precisely the same "trigger" is at work in PTSD and in veterans. Those trapped in their world and in the world of bureaucracy try ceaselessly to find a peaceful exit and operate on the principle of *damage avoidance*. Through this constant tension to avoid harm, they overload the amygdala again, problems pile up, and their consciousness can no longer see beyond. The exit can then become the idea of suicide as flight from the external enemy more than the internal. The only problem is that the chief enemy is still — the internal.

THE LOGICAL RULE OF "POSTPONEMENT"

The rule is simple and psychologically beyond much doubt. If we have often verified that episodes are passing, that misfortune is not locked in and final — unless we invoke it — why not postpone something like suicide? We always have time, and we certainly have something "to do first", and we want to. As the priest in Lokva Rogoznica said to me when, after countless laments, I asked what he thought of one day giving up: "Do not be afraid. The resting place up there will not run away from us." And in the meantime I lived through a heap of good things and changed my mind — so my opinion from the past *no longer applies*. I sometimes want to decide now for my own future, as in faith, and we probably only live our decision.

"FAMILY"

My grandfather, exemplary in many ways and also a "socialist believer", went for coffee with Heidegger and Schluck and with Bottomore as his mentor; but he was on the opposite side from Nietzsche — he was a flagellator! My father saw him maltreat and, in his rage, also beat the donkey and push a branch into its anus. In that, and in other statements and his relations with his brothers, my father saw — his *sadism* and pleasure in domination. Why he was like that — as also to himself — why he lacked, in places, love or diplomacy alongside all his knowledge, I do not know, or shall explain later. Knowledge puffs up; the heart is not earned through letters. But there I am different from my grandfather. I even wanted to become vegetarian little by little. The apple does not fall far from the tree, since similar things interest me, and I have recorded his whole biography in the novel *INITIUM*. But I differ from him: I am of mixed blood, and the things I do not endorse are repulsive to me, even when from my own distinguished grandfather or father. Because with children, animals, and nature I have always had a clean relation and "karma". And even with women — even when it appears otherwise in black-and-white papers.

Whilst we all looked at God or the Devil in the "religious" and "Manichaeian" way, there is a great deal of ontology here. *Diabolos* is the one who *lies* and *divides*. God is the one who *"is"*. First, he lies that one can be God or be without God. Second, he divides the person, because the person disintegrates, and is not neatly classified into good and bad, healthy and ill. It is a process. Various theories surround Nietzsche's collapse. Biology has its own cause whose roots we can explore indefinitely — but his genes decided alongside illness and psychic breaks. How did this manifest? First, if he really did contract syphilis, he sought physical love too, though he wanted to be relatively independent of it. Second, wanting to be the "Übermensch", he set standards he could not meet. He who criticised Christians became himself, in effect, a "Christian without God", in bitterness and powerlessness. Signing himself as "Dionysus" or "the Crucified" near the end, he tried to reconcile what at the close was actually dividing him.

TRAUMA AS A LEARNED AND RELATIVE VALUE AND REALITY

When I say that consciousness of illness affects our image of ourselves and others, I do not mean only an idea or a feeling but real reality. Recent findings support tendencies that once seemed like science fiction. One experiment showed that women who believed they had a scar on their face (the marking having been wiped off without their knowing) later reported being subjected to inappropriate comments and discrimination — only because they believed they had it.

My present wife, who has schizophrenia, in three and a half years had four months without taking therapy or receiving injections, and this had no impact on her behaviour, peace, work, or satisfaction in love with me. As time went on, I saw not a single sign of schizophrenia in her; what was once called "post-war nervousness" and the idea that "for evil people there should be injections" has, in my view, nothing to do with malice or unreality — it is an ordinary "child's question". She remained a captive child within an adult, and this is why she is so "easy" for cohabitation. Not in the infantile sense but the spiritual (as Jesus says in the story with the children). Schizophrenia was only a diagnostic picture behind which lay both a child and a grown person in a world full of "grown but over-forced" spirits. Contamination is mutual but the logical sequence is different from what people think.

I saw all her traits immediately in the expression of the face, stability, expressions, trust, and behaviour. I did not need to read any of her records to know with whom I would live for years. And we did not fit together as two "lunatics" or as the only righteous — we function in all fields because love, truth, and uncorrupted nature are something natural and light, which we wish to others. Something that no longer prompts comparison and bitterness and fear at the question of why half of marriages in the world lack this — and informally up to two thirds. We grieve rather for the fact that people put so much effort into the opposite direction. Love is not

effort or a cross, as they say. Life perhaps is. But love is "good", and good seems almost not to "exist" — it is normal, like the air we breathe.

Jesus's suffering was for the body and the longing to extend love. Our suffering is worse because it is both bodily and spiritual. That is why Jesus directed an appeal to the women of Jerusalem and to us: "Do not weep for me." Many say: one must invest, remind, work, not take for granted. Yes — but if you have reached such love or have received it, you do not need to "work" so that it might be. You do not need to "perform" and convince yourself and others that the marriage is ideal (as my parents did) and to wait for the masks to fall or to save it from collapse. Love itself operates from itself through us and our will. Deeds are then only a product, as sunbeams are only a product of the sun. You do not even need to greet each other; you "know" the nature of the relationship. You do not discover it, do not guard it, do not nurture it — you have it, and you are that relationship. That is the highest stage of love I have lived in these nearly four years.

THE SUICIDE OF HUMAN RELATIONS AND THE SEXES

Here I do not mean only that human sexuality falls with time and influences mood, with the root in the dissonance between oneself, one's relations, and the wider system (family, school, state, international order — not the other way around). I have often thought we men are in a harder position. We are more inclined to addictions, idleness, homelessness, being misunderstood. When women say they are vulnerable and objectified, my instinctive answer has often been that we cannot even be that — we are literally invisible or misunderstood. In court they dug up my bad lapses more than the romantic ones. Yet our "growth" is straightforward, cumulative, and pays off long-term. Time and ageing go in our favour, as does fertility — which is the false thesis my first wife held: that I was infertile. Our work on ourselves is later but more secure, while women's biological clock ticks faster. My present wife will probably not be able to

conceive, but I no longer see that as decisive in life, although the phobia of it sometimes is exaggerated.

TOWARDS OUR PARTNER AND LIFE IN OLD AGE

When one is young, one expects much of oneself. One follows others' ageing, ages with them, and finally one's own turn comes. Even those of less good character successfully evade their bad side until they age and are stripped bare. The body weakens, attention is concentrated on small things at the end, good or bad. That is when burdens and offences of the one who remains and helps — the younger one, often the spouse or more frequently the wife — accumulate. While he treats her as a maid, or she so treats herself, three things are forgotten: humane and empathic conduct (which is more important and more durable to develop than moral purity or the superiority and ego of youth); forgiveness towards them; and the seeking of forgiveness towards others. Even anticipated. With the years, **sensory overload** grows, alongside a lower threshold of consciousness and control. The partner is regarded as **intimacy without limits**; changes on both sides become heavier or more stressful; refinement is lost as one speculates less, and the other is regarded as a **extension of the self**. There the rift grows. The nervous system **burns out**; misophonia intensifies. Volition itself depends on strength, and on the exercise of mind that many neglect. My father was more concentrated on bodily exercise than spiritual, though one built the other. Now he can no longer exercise his body sufficiently and the spirit is too free, closed in itself. That is the heavy dilemma: to numb the man pharmacologically, or to let him have absolute and dangerous "freedom", or something in between.

MATHEMATICS AND DETERMINISM IN MY FAMILY

EPIGENETICS today holds that we are not determined by our decision, especially not in the short term, but *strongly directed*.²⁹ So with genes and temperament, even though we may hate them. They are a "loaded gun"; the environment is the trigger.

The third generation usually has the power to resolve familial trauma. To it — to me — it is also easiest to do so, because we have diluted genes, greater consciousness, and younger years. So I have the hope of being less aggressive in old age, and of holding family cohesion together rather than a mere sum of competing individuals. Fear of the same scenario is a powerful motivator if it is moderate. Even algorithms have arranged the life of our family as follows:

◆Generation one — my *grandfather* — was base and **foundation, carrier of the darkness**. He needed the most self-confidence and knowledge to succeed. His was the hardest path materially, physically, and socially. But his rise was greatest, as was the fall of his moral ego. Without the first there would be no burden, illness, sin, debt — but neither life and gifts to enjoy and build upon. When I asked him why he shouted at his wife while I had no wife at all then, he shrugged and asked "how was he to act against his feelings?" He fell in love with my grandmother only for her "good calves", and they were not well-matched. In his son he probably saw too much of what bothered him in his wife. His fanatical love for me was a **subversive narcissistic extension** and a sublimation of parental love and moral conscience. I, fortunately, saw this and never "chose" who is father and who grandfather. He was not a **schizoid** nor a malignant *concealer* or

²⁹Epigenetics: the study of changes in gene expression that do not involve alterations to the underlying DNA sequence. Key reviews: Meaney and Szyf, "Maternal care, epigenetic regulation, and the transmission of vulnerability to stress" (2005); Yehuda et al. on Holocaust trauma transmission, *Biological Psychiatry* 80 (2016). The "loaded gun, environment is the trigger" formulation is now standard. On the so-called third-generation cohort effect — that the grandchildren of trauma survivors carry both physiological vulnerability and a unique position from which to break the inherited pattern — see also Mark Wolynn, *It Didn't Start with You* (Viking, 2016).

anhedonist. It is striking how often such persons are exactly top scientists or surgeons — highly concentrated. The more labile and emotional creatives like me are only a little above average intelligence. The problem was not in deficit of upbringing, love, or knowledge. It was in the problem of the "arranged" marriage of his parents — and mild innate sadism, egocentricity, competition, free will, and the wounds of childhood.

◆Generation two — my *father* — was the handsome, **built hero** who through sheer will kept the balance, resisted, corrected injustice, endured everything and wanted to be different — breaking the educational curse where he was closest to the original gene. His merits against the demons he did not even fully understand are the greatest, and he counts as a "hero" who broke through to the other side. He even buried his father with dignity, despite everything.

◆Generation three — *me* — if I endure and understand them all and become better, am only the **architect of victory**. The final **signatory** but with morally and physically the lightest genes and the lightest conditions to round it off. That is not visible "through the skin" and outwardly, let alone honestly.

I AM HEALTHY WHEN I LOVE THE "DEVIL" BUT NOT THE DEVILISH — I AM SICK WHEN I LOVE THE DEVILISH BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE "DEVIL"

Many of these problems have often been answered: "It is from the devil." Or — "It is not from the devil, it is from you, from family, from society, from this, from that." In childhood we used to debate with my late catechist preparing for confirmation about whether the "devil" is a person, a fallen angel, or an abstract concept. Even parents would intervene and we would quote both perspectives every evening. Today I see it does not

matter. It is even possible that it is both, but is irrelevant to our will, which is in any case decisive. Radical theology and purity of thought must affirm that a human being has the capacity to love someone who is largely evil — to the point where they themselves become evil. That is my general conclusion, as is most of the text. Because no man is ever wholly evil; through contamination he becomes mutually under-capacitated. A bureaucrat or someone in greater extremity is not wholly "cold", but towards him empathy or praise has no effect, because he no longer feels the smaller part of himself. The Devil, if personified and not merely an abstract concept, cannot and does not wish to love at all. His corruption is eternal and the being is 100% turned in on itself. But its substance and past is still — even in the smallest part — good and created from Being and God. As Goethe says, "evil often works for the good and for God's benefit", though without intention. You can even pity him. People who fall into spiritual and mental disorders love only the product of "devilish" energy and lies — that is something else. That is when they need a doctor. But as in the Christian examples: the doctor (or Jesus) works only with the inner co-operation of the sick person. He does not even free them by force. The problem is that everyone comes to doctors with the key of their freedom in hand and asks for the key.

THE FALSE PICTURE: "PHOTOGRAPHS LIE"

Viktor Emanuel Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning* says he was irritated by his own pictures in newspapers, presented as "the fall, humiliation, and misfortune of the prisoner". He says these images were often — false. Many of the prisoners at that moment were not thinking about evil, death, revenge, even unhappiness or depression. They might at that very moment be happy — because they had a piece of bread and saw a ray of sun, or had rested longer than other days. They saw an *absolute relativity*, I would say, rather than the *relative absoluteness* that scandalised viewers see (partly with reason).

ABOUT THE CAMP AND MY VISIT

Many of the cited — Frankl, Janjić, and others — were in the camp. I was only on a visit. I asked myself how I came by the "fortune" of being only a visitor. Was I someone searching, in the world's "camp", for the stripped-bare meaning of life in that concentrated large and small camp? I went to film on already actual themes of detabooing questions of evil through "the banality of evil" and astonishment that this should never have happened (**Hannah Arendt**); through the privation of evil (Augustine); through the industrialisation which in competition or historical chains or as an end in itself produces the unconscious and future factories of death (**Heidegger**); through the question of position and decision towards life and death, good and evil, victim and guard and aggressor and *kapo* (Frankl). These are all delayed and well-known themes about the black-and-white colouring of the whole world, not only one moment. But I went there not merely from attraction to "dark tourism", or anti-ideology, but to look and marvel at the wonder that what one sees there is in the first instance an enormous quantity of life. That it looks like a city, houses in nature, where in appearance there is something beautiful next to the small town, where nature is still there and even a kind of "peace". But the fascination with the process of annulment, the fact that someone was and suddenly is not, prompts curiosity and the question of what then is the truth — life or death? Apart from hatred, forgiveness, strength, suffering. Even Frankl says that the first day was marked by curiosity. Even the jump from the bridge is at first an adrenal flight and an exit from the slow killing routine and root of all final evils — but then it goes into the abyss.

Why do we all come to observe and to make any kind of synthesis, empathy, or judgement towards anyone, let alone everyone? Because there we see the borderline of the finite and the infinite. We do not even seek nothingness there — we seek *being*. Such as it was, such as it ought to have been, and such as it may yet be. Those persons are not merely symbols and images. When Frankl said that in every cloud and day he saw his wife, that was not only hope and love — it was an ontological reality. She really

existed because of that act. There we all developed, as he says, a *position* towards life — even in limited conditions and motives. The problem is that even if I should want it I cannot increase nothingness or non-being there if it exists. I only increase being by my presence. But not merely as a "passive observer". This is why new films open new horizons and experiences from such dark places. We seek truth — not political, moral, biological, but the essential. And TV provides always a different feeling than live.

On the other hand **Oleg Mandić** — 93 years old — is utterly realistic, vital, and even positive.³⁰ The last child to leave Auschwitz. He looks upon it as a part of life; once he understood, later, that he had been on the edge of the abyss, and the scale of where he had been, he concluded that the hardest had already passed and that he had no further reason or right to be anxious, at least not for himself — and he has lived a happy and content life. That is an extraordinary turn and conclusion, instead of self-pity, fear, hatred. It would be foolish to want what he or Frankl or **Kolbe** or **Edith Stein** have. We are where we are. Our adoption of a position is always and again present, Frankl writes, regardless of how compressed it is and what role we play. There is no such injustice in our position. Not because we deserved more or less or were luckier or unluckier, but because everywhere, sooner or later, we have an equal decision to make. One then asks how he kept that consciousness, while my grandparents — who also lived through the Second World War and all the armies — lost in the end both joy and consciousness and even hatred. There lies the problem — not everyone takes the same position in similar or identical or different circumstances. I visited a camp to film about banality and normality there.

When the daughter of **Höss** — the commandant of Auschwitz — said in her late interviews that her father was "the nicest father in the world", "the most ideal and moral he could have been", she did not mean this only

³⁰Oleg **Mandić** (b. 1933) is the last child to leave Auschwitz alive on 27 January 1945. A Croatian by birth, he has spoken publicly for decades about his survival and worked as a Yugoslav and later Croatian diplomat. As of 2026 he is in his nineties and remains active as a witness. The author cites his testimony of remarkable equanimity — the recognition that the worst had already passed — as a counter-example to despair.

because she is biased.³¹ She did not say he *appeared* good or *acted* as if good. By her, he *was* such. She as such creates and constitutes him also ontologically. And therefore, beyond punishment and responsibility, our understanding of the truth — let alone hatred — falls or grows confused.

PERSPECTIVES ON SUICIDE — CATEGORIES AND HEREDITY

Suicide has become a separate category for research; categories shift in everything, often too often. In the DSM-5-TR manual, "*Suicidal Behaviour Disorder*" (SBD) is listed as a condition warranting "further study". It may become a standalone diagnosis — which is both a great plus and minus for that problem. Whilst it is correct that depression is not always the sole precursor, new codes have recently been introduced (ICD-10/11). We also have the *suicide crisis syndrome* (SCS) — an acute state of constricted thinking, which I agree with from my own case; it was perhaps more accurate than my "acute psychosis". Impulsivity is the most frequent crisis driver, but **60–70%** of cases are not bound to clinical depression. Prof. Jakovljević warns of the syndrome of "double defeat": after hard situations come the still harder problems of post-stress adaptation. One needs great stability in instability to be able to cooperate with others and oneself, since the point of clouded consciousness is precisely that it is "clouded", unreachable and unmeasurable — and is the sum of all medical disciplines and other sciences.

³¹Rudolf Höss (1901–1947), commandant of Auschwitz, hanged at the site of his crimes on 16 April 1947 following conviction by the Polish Supreme National Tribunal. His daughter Inge-Brigitt ("Brigitte") Höss (1933–2023) gave her first interview to Thomas Harding in 2013 (Washington Post; basis for *Hanns and Rudolf*), and her final interviews appeared in *The Commandant's Shadow* (dir. Daniela Völker, 2023) — released alongside Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest* (2023), which won two Academy Awards. Brigitte consistently described her father as "the nicest father in the world" and minimised the scale of the Holocaust. The author cites this not to question her sincerity but to argue that the ontological constitution of "father" in her language was not separate from but constitutive of her experience. Evil can be Kantian even 'beautiful' if banal or sublime if shockingly exposed. I see „hidden evil“ in seemingly peaceful nature and buildings there. *Black tourism?*

When one recalls **Cobain** and his uncles, one asks how much hereditary genes influence. They reportedly influence between **30 and 50%**. It is more often a risk of *character, impulsivity, or aggressiveness*. Mental illness and disorder are not always inherited, but *predisposition, patterns* are — and so is the environment. The cases of **Whitney Houston** or **Matthew Perry** describe perfectly the hard life behind the mask of the easy. The line between neglect and a chain without return, or with harder return, is thin. People have often asked me when I fell ill. I do not know. When the symptoms appeared, when I "broke" or recovered — these are other questions. For a long time fate is not out of control, and then it becomes so.

REASONS FOR AND AGAINST SUICIDE

Thomas Joiner arranges the reasons for suicide in three main points:³²

- A sense of **burdensomeness** to others
- A sense of **thwarted belongingness** to anything
- Loss of the **fear of pain** (acquired capability)

I myself reached the last point — and there he is right. People who accept defeat but do not drown in it usually survive, and like me do not return "easily" to the hospital. At first fear repelled me. Even **Schopenhauer** sees that the suicide is not unhappy with life as such but with the *conditions* of life. **Nietzsche** is firm on the question of "free death" — he holds that "dragging on" to the end is also a sign of cowardice. **Szasz** sees in it "a basic human right". **Fromm** knows that it is only the *extreme end of the scale*. **Buber** precisely sees the pure human encounter and the dignity of professional relation (and its limit) as the real cure. Suppression of feeling, as with sexuality of which I speak later, also leads to destruction and frustration; it is hard to be wholly liberal and wholly conservative on the question of intimacy. It is valuable simply to lay the problems bare. But here too we are late. *Nurse Ratched* is only a mirror and an action-reaction in both directions, not pure evil in my view, though people are interested in the unknown like a mental hospital. While the doctors write and read many pages about us, we are always writing the rest of our lives and diagnoses.

³²C.K. later on

That can be excellent cooperation for science and humanity. But it still seems that this hospital is not a "hospital". Mental illness can be a **myth and a label** and it can be more real than all the rest. Mental illness is a chess game in which we are all one move behind, studying the unknown terrain of the other.

What are the reasons to *live*? **Matt Haig** says:³³

- **We are not our depression, illness, suicidality, or failure**
- **We live for the person we will become — and for others**
- **The world and life are beautiful and we have not seen everything**
- **Nothing lasts forever — not even pain**
- **Small things are great**
- **Reading and writing and creation are salvation**

³³But I understand my grandmother's desire to "die peacefully and with dignity on the floor." Because she saw that even her help was just a bureaucratic preparation for the peace that awaited me later, given the hundreds of changes and questions about who was responsible for the burial, etc. And then everyone defends themselves and no one gets anything. The same goes for universities, we all went to "trendy" ones and ended up with minors, as did my dad, who also majored in education because everything had changed. And the paperwork for the diploma was always more difficult and expensive than the diploma itself. You only see that in the end and it's not just private despair, and it's similar with life permits. Only Yugoslavia protected acquired small business rights even more than a democratic state in which legal and factual changes lead to increasing closure. This is not a scientific analysis or phenomenology. This is my testimony and a real feeling.

MY UNINTENTIONAL EXPERIMENT

When I sent the message that I would really kill myself and only then would they take my despair seriously, I had a statistically interesting response. About a *third* did not take it seriously or at all and was indifferent. A *third* cared, but did not take more concrete measures. And maybe a *third* — including my professor — took concrete action: they called institutions, parents, and so on, even with discomfort and a feeling of intervening too much or being over-cautious. I shall not draw a conclusion as to whether that is good or not.

WHAT DO PEOPLE MOST REGRET BEFORE A NATURAL DEATH? — COMPARISON WITH ME

In studies of people in hospice or palliative care, many regret the following things in life:

- **The courage to live by one's *own principle*, not by others' expectations**
- ***Less work* (men, but also women)**
- **The courage to *express one's needs and feelings***
- **Staying in *contact* with the close, family, and friends**
- **The choice of greater *happiness* and joy in life**

We can see a different way of thinking from people who "want" death. I can see that what bothered me — and provoked a conflict within myself and with the expectations of the environment, real or imagined — was precisely all of this. I have fulfilled, and have started to fulfil, my wishes along nearly identical points:

- ▶ **I chose my own principles — I could not enter the patterns that would have annulled my style of life for over 25 years.**
- ▶ **I worked less.**
- ▶ **I expressed my feelings to people and institutions.**
- ▶ **I remained in contact, even if superficial, with people I had long known.**

► **I chose my happiness and where to seek it.**

So I have fulfilled, especially now and finally, my wishes and visions, and the state has even supported it. But whilst making those choices I felt that I was an "enemy" of the normal system and a drone or someone undeserving of life, marriage, family, and peace. I agreed with that internally and struggled within myself with two principles. I did not enjoy less work, but neither could I enjoy work six days a week without the chance to devote myself to my hobbies and values — especially since I perhaps wear out time faster than others. The paradox is this:

- **I wanted to *kill myself* because I *lived* as people at the end wish they had also lived.**
- **And those who *did not kill themselves* lived as they did not wish to, and for which they would probably kill themselves if they had to repeat it all Nietzscheanly.**

And I would not kill myself to repeat everything. They lived but were already in fact dead. I wanted to kill myself but in fact lived — and only then began to live. My example is not an ideal type, nor is theirs. The problem is that we do not know what we are doing and what we want until everything has passed, or until there is research and testimony like this.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE “ABYSS”

If I say that in the abyss the best can perish, it is best in the end to stop at that observation. It can be interesting to see and witness what all the causes are, and how large that chasm is. My fall — if I may call it that — was not into ordinary loss but into a state where the very ground of meaning became uncertain. The abyss is not death; death would be simpler. The abyss is the experience of looking into a possible non-existence of meaning while still being alive.

Bureaucracy flourished even in socialism, and — according to some, including Praxis thinkers — it contributed to “feudal” divisions and the

breakdown into smaller parts hungry for present and future power, regardless of whether the framing is national or cosmopolitan. The abyss is not only personal; it is also structural. When the structures meant to hold us up become themselves abyssal — hollow, formal, indifferent — then the personal abyss is amplified beyond what any individual can bear alone.

My second wife claims everything opposite to what my first wife claimed, and perhaps she too is simply subjective, and I am the one who has changed — but it cannot be so radically different. There is the testimony of the women, and there is the testimony of the commission and the critique from the Gledalište of the Kinoklub Zagreb for the biographical film. Why do I mention these others? Because that is the most important recognition and confirmation in my life. It came after I had passed through and closed the cycle of my life — not from someone superior or smarter, nor someone who would necessarily understand, but from those who saw the work for what it was. The abyss can be measured, in retrospect, by what comes after it; by what survives, and by what acknowledges that survival.

IVANČIĆ AND FRANKL ON DIAGNOSIS **(HAGIOTHERAPY — LOGOTHERAPY)**

In *Za umorne* [For the Weary], the late Croatian theologian and hagiotherapist **Tomislav Ivančić** addresses precisely the problem of sleeping that I saw in my "slow-dying" paternal grandmother.³⁴ Building on the problem of workaholism (likewise a flight and inertia), he claims with reason that "equally tragic is the person who sleeps day and night." Not only does such a one die — they are "already dead". The harmony of sleep and work is the recipe for a long earthly life. Food, drink, exercise, rest, and only then — sleep. My grandmother dropped all this except going to the toilet and occasionally solving crosswords. Her body tired itself because she "grumbled at parts of her own organism and was unhappy because of her legs and ears". Absolutely correct. For years she gave up walking, with the justification of "bad hair", "dressing", "what others will say outside", "fear of falling", "no one wants to go out with me", "I do not want to burden anyone", "my feet ache" (although we brought a chiropodist and bought socks), "the shoes are too small" (although we brought larger). When all this was disproved, just as with my grandfather, she would simply "leave the conversation" or begin to drive us out as if we were "exhausting, burdening, tormenting her" because she needed to turn off the light and sleep. By Ivančić, the nervous, ill-natured, dissatisfied person is — half-dead — because they neither know how to tire themselves nor how to rest. All this requires "firm character", and walking is precisely "the exit from one's own house into God's house". For me, walking has been the key to inspiration and rest in student, artistic, and difficult days (or running). When

³⁴Tomislav **Ivančić** (1938–2017), Croatian Catholic priest, theologian, and founder of hagiotherapy (a pastoral approach combining theology and psychological care). Key texts: *Za umorne* (Teovizija); *Dijagnoza duše i hagioterapija*. Robert Torre (Croatian psychiatrist, deceased), critical authors on contemporary psychiatry — author cites his work on medicalisation of suffering and the "tyranny of artificial positivity". Anthony de Mello (1931–1987), Indian Jesuit, *Awareness*: "most people live in a dream — and kill themselves in the dream". Matt **Haig**, *Reasons to Stay Alive* (Canongate, 2015): a memoir of recovery from depression and the source of the six reasons listed by the author at the end of the section.

stresses (intensive or extensive) are constant, a person leaves themselves and loses themselves. And then they dream — because the "soul remembers good things". Nothing tires one so much as unnecessary sleep. It is extraordinary that someone who does not want this is not aware of it.

GAP IN (SELF-)ASSESSMENT

For **genuine suicide** *Ivančić* holds that the cure is often — a kindly look, a word. Here, however, that is no solution because the case is **unconscious, progressive, latent suicide**. But things must be called by their name — my grandmother did not die, she killed herself in instalments. Unlike other theologians, *Ivančić* holds that suicide is in the spiritual sense an act because of the "conscience that we have not fulfilled our purpose". That perhaps was my priority — the more so as I made the effort that it should not be so. From the other side, spirituals hold that it is an act of rejecting oneself and of trying to be someone else. It seems *contradictory* but is not. I in fact did not accept myself as I was, and feared others would not. I wanted to be a "good husband, father, worker..." — and I was not succeeding. So I wanted to be something else, and felt I could do better; and so I had the sense that I had failed *as myself*. Or: *I did not fulfil my purpose, and therefore did not want to be me but someone else who would*. Suicide is a problem created in the perception of life and death, meaning and purpose, and is itself not the main issue.

Today it does not even occur to me to think in the same way for the same reasons. Possible new motives, problems, thinking — yes. But my suicidality was a peak of life-changes rather than a pattern that repeats. After that peak I started anew from the bottom, or from the top. That was the time of illness, the Pandemic, the earthquake, fasting. The *cumulation* did affect me, but quite differently from what is said on television. Being at home with my wife and cat did not bother me, nor did the closure. Opening to the world shook me, and even began to repel me from closing in on myself. I saw that everything is in fact habit, and that in that change of

habits or imbalance many "normal" people went into extremes, aggression, depression, suicide, opiates. The external world is often the trigger (or not) for our internal changes.

I even had, in 2016, the idea of a **"happy suicide"** — because I knew that after my degree, work, marriage, success, only "worse" awaited me — regardless of further success and desire for a quick doctorate, renovating the house, or some other safeguarding of status and future. That was even out of a fear which is not fear, but a realistic prediction of the parabola of life. I wanted to stay in control of the existing state, in a non-tense, preventive way. Of course I would not be writing this book then — which is worth more than my legal works.

FRIENDSHIP WITH DEATH AND ENEMIES

For the close of the short Ivančić cross-section: he sees death as an *ally*, and the powerless enemy as a friend. Illness as an opportunity for trust in God; death as the door to life; suffering as the door to the resurrection. But all that only when death is — inevitable. When and why it is inevitable is the great temporal problem. As long as we decide about death, it cannot be a friend in that sense. Physical death is also not a positive or negative value as such — what matters is *how one dies*. Here I mean less the moral value than the value of state and stance. Our positions shape the world more than the reverse.

One more remark. Ivančić says we have the conscience not because we did not fulfil our purpose — but because we *thought* we did not. I, for example, was perfectly at peace when I knew and felt that fatherhood might not be for me, but that I was not against it either. And then a higher "Providence" allowed me to be freely what I am, and allowed my first wife to conceive. Because she knew that it would be easier for me to accept her happiness (and to "forgive" the fact that it was with my relative) than to force my own happiness for her sake and for the sake of the child or God. She knew I would be truly happy, and that my relative had a child, and so

did she — although it is unusual that I had a ten-year relation (of one kind or another) with her, and he came after all this and quickly conceived. On one side, this looks like heroism, or a three-sided heavy sin (and it is): my instability and infidelity, her infidelity, his "interference" in my marriage. But it is not heroism — it is the meaning of "heart" of which theology, the Bible, or anyone else speaks. My intention was right. I worked against myself in positive and negative senses. But I did not work against others — and nature arranged itself. With this I also brought happiness to my new wife, who likewise wants children but, because of years, is not burdened, since she would have neither me nor children otherwise. We would all have remained imprisoned, and our holiness or our pain would have been in vain. This is the depth of the truth that *dirty water is the purest wine* — but it does not abolish the ambivalence of life's coin.

"THE OBSERVATION" AS AN ONTOLOGICAL LAW

Ivančić sees as the start of dissatisfaction precisely when *body and soul do not go together*, when our desire and our power are out of joint, as are act and consciousness. That I saw in my family and in myself. Before, I would read or write books (under compulsion); now I live them before I read them. I read something I have already experienced and see that I am not the first. So with songs, films, work. Where does transcendence occur — not in exorcism, fanaticism, loss, or parallel reality and fantasy. It occurs in concrete acts of liberation of the eye, will, and action. Here I see that we are slaves not only to a fallen nature but to *fallen will and fallen or undeveloped knowledge*. That is the chief problem. Hence God or Being does not perform (only) miracles such as people seek in paranormal, experiential, or selfish spheres, but rather — opens horizons. That is the most important thing, and it changes the human being. There alone is God, "fate", nature, karma, or however one chooses to believe, something that necessarily steps in for salvation. Therefore we sometimes cannot help ourselves, nor can people help us. Because there simply must occur (not necessarily an evil) a space in which we will continue to live. That is either

our meeting with God or vice versa, because God (life) sometimes "does not allow" something to happen. To me, he did not allow suicide, the giving up of the house or the car, a dangerous job, a "toxic" relationship. Because there was no complete future there. And this is an experiential proof that everything has a reason and that we are not abandoned to ourselves merely because we are weak. Only when we truly want something — do we receive it.

What of "natural evil"? That is the only question to which I have no answer. Is it coincidence as confirmation of freedom, an invisible karma, the prevention of personal and collective new evil? Z. Sudac strikes me as quite broad in his reasonable explanation, and may be listened to.

THE TURNING POINT — TESTIMONY OF A FILM

When the festival jury wrote, in spite of the technical weaknesses, that my film "won them over because it was brutally honest, almost *therapeutic*; it creates a vortex of emotions that remain with the viewer after the film, and represents a meaningful point in the apparently chaotic *imagescript*... it is a stream of consciousness about the life of a couple, brought forth through the *distinctive and powerful figure of Bartul Marušić*", it was not "my" victory. It was the victory of my values, and proof of the wholeness and rightness of spirit and of our mutual influence — not only in the negative but in the positive sense and as example. Falls sometimes raise a person higher, and from the heights we sometimes wish to return to the beginning and the bottom.

I do not even think I am "strong" — but I am certainly distinctive. That epithet was not put there by accident. Strength is not born with. It is not gained only by exercise. It is — *decision*. Even the decision of lesser resistance — that it is better to survive than perish, to love rather than hate. Easier and better to be oneself and continue forward than to resist and fight over things that will not impress people: over who is right, why something ended badly. That too sometimes serves. But to bear witness to

one's own victories, and the desire that certain values survive in spite of everything, is the most beautiful and exemplary thing — and then our legacy is not only for the otherworldly discussion but for this one too. My gratitude and love for my grandfather, my father, my paternal grandmother and my wife — and for the dog — was while they lived, not only after death. I confirm their being and wholeness, just as I confirm my own. The will to survive and to keep the wholeness of one's spirit and reputation (not success or reward) is what makes the weak strong as an imperative.

But it is not important whether I am strong. What is important is that someone equally strong, educated, beautiful, wonderful, *noticed* such a thing in me and ascribed to me not only praise but the construction and completion of my work — the most beautiful and perhaps rare thing I have ever heard and lived. That is not praise — that is confirmation of my story, my spirit, my love and struggle in spite of flaws and falls. That is where others recognise themselves too, and every kind word I write about others, and others about me — mutually beautifies the spirit and lives and motivates.

In what does this motivate me today? Not to continue being a fighter, filmmaker, writer — that is all in question. Rather, that in a new darkness of thoughts, fears, emotions, hopelessness, struggle, *demountedness*, I remember — who *mounted* me and who *made* me strong, because declaration is also constitution. The jury, the young chairperson, the others who gave ratings on the internet (good and bad), family, friends, wife, pets, known and unknown, society, God. That is a multitude of mutual recognitions of human existence as worthwhile — even when the person is not a winner. But I want, through victory, to help others too. I even fear losing reputation or being a loser, that people might not see that my process is sometimes hard and uncomfortable, and that I can be "boring". But that also moves me — to keep that lovely epithet, to control myself and stay in the position I have built. To be weak sometimes — but in essence, someone who is not a loser, who is not hated, who is valued — who is strong and distinctive. That is a **counter-therapy** stronger than anything.

It was — a competition of 60 unknown films and authors. That is pure being, and every psychological and ontological confirmation that my truth is not that I am weak and occasionally demounted, nor that I am strong and always in place. Rather that, in the end, I am *whole* — and that I choose this and want it for myself and others, and through this love myself and others now independently and ever more. Because that cannot be taken from me. I can take it from myself — and even that is a question.

That gives me motivation to remember and not give up, and never again to be in depression. And I am not. After the divorce, and even during it, it never occurred to me to kill myself or surrender. I even went too far into romance or anxiety or work and ideals. But when everything ended and stabilised — full harmony and peace, where my only fault by which I show (not my torn state and dependence, but my emotional sensitivity) is that I cried from fulfilment and joy like a small child, and that those tears always return me to *being*. I cannot go back any more, because I did not go back even when I did not see that people and God look on, and that I am not alone.

I am simply a statistically elite fissure of happiness to have had opportunities to receive what I received, to do what I did, to love what I loved, and to have been loved by others. That is the Oscar of all Oscars. That is not exaggeration — it is intensified truth. It means that observation holds even when we do not see. The "sisters" in the Ursuline convent in Varaždin prayed for my prayers and others' even when I was no longer there. Should I, returning now and seeing that some have died, not believe that our success is mutual and our work, prayer, or observation reciprocal — and that life does not stop if I stop?

Maja, Mr Heidl, the respected mentor from the faculty and school, the festival director or radio and television persons I do not know and shall never meet — they saved my life. Not from perishing or killing myself. They gave such **fullness** and confirmation of meaning that I had wished for and felt, that they themselves are not aware how much they influenced something where they were not obliged and had no reason. I will not run

now and bother everyone. But to quietly bear witness in this way that *one word can be greater therapy than all medicines* is no insult to society, the human being, and the individual. It is the supreme proof that every human being who both helps and receives help is infinitely capable of saving a life and giving it value. That is proof that the right word and the right intention, and objective intention from the depth of subjective desire in the right place — saves lives. The smile of a psychiatrist or a mother when she sees me — saves my life.

Therefore, instead of "evil returns evil" — good returns good. To whom? To all. To all except those who do not wish it. And for them we will help also, so that their wish may become as pure and right as possible, and so that they do not desire — death.

V. E. FRANKL AND "I"

Viktor Emanuel Frankl lived through the hell of the Holocaust whilst already a doctor and a writer.³⁵ He spoke with his wife through sky, thought, and memory. She was indeed still alive then, but he did not only create her image and a consolation for himself. He *created* her and renewed their relationship and his own life-force. That love took the hardest blow when, on returning to Vienna, he learned that she had died

³⁵ Viktor Emil **Frankl** (1905–1997), Austrian psychiatrist, neurologist, and Holocaust survivor; founder of logotherapy ("therapy through meaning"), often called the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy after Freud and Adler. Survived three years across four concentration camps — Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Kaufering (sub-camp of Dachau), and Türkheim. Frankl married Tilly Grosser, a nurse at Rothschild Hospital in Vienna, in 1941; she was forced to abort their child shortly after the marriage, was deported with him to Theresienstadt in 1942, then on to Auschwitz, from where she was transferred to Bergen-Belsen and died there of typhus. Frankl's father Gabriel died at Theresienstadt in February 1943; his mother and brother Walter were killed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz; his sister Stella escaped to Australia. In 1947 Frankl married Eleonore "Elly" Katharina Schwindt, a practising Catholic; she transcribed his manuscripts (including those bearing on his memory of Tilly) without jealousy, and remained with him for fifty years. Their daughter Gabriele became a child psychologist. Frankl died in Vienna on 2 September 1997 of heart failure, aged 92.

after leaving the camp — as had his brother, his mother in the gas chamber, and his father. When I was on the other side of the wire in present times, I did not even know that his life would in fact mirror mine. I had already recognised in my own life — before reading him — the psychological laws he later elaborates. Above all, his sense of "betrayal" when he went to marry again. He was not left as I was, but he did not want to go against himself, his consistency, his love. And he did not want to be alone. The same thing with me, except that my situation is conditionally easier.

Encountering the deaths of the closest and youngest members of the family in peace-time, and being left by my first wife, I lived through that feeling. I even told my catechist that my feeling was harder than his after his wife had died of cancer — because I still had hope, and a not-knowing why everything happened, and whilst she was alive I did not want to fall easily in love with a new girl, and I had also lost hope. This was classified as "attachment" and the fear of abandonment, part of my GPL diagnosis. I did not close all the doors. Especially not before God, after visiting the place where we had gone together on a spiritual retreat at Drivenik — to the old tower and the pure nature, the beginning of our love. I did not experience there a "reset", as one passer-by called it; I sought there again the fullness of life and of love and of myself, that is, of God. At the same time I walked through my past and my present — not out of nostalgia so much as from contact with what at the time I had not noticed and even resisted. I came to the place where we had played catch with a piece of wood and Father Ike laughed; I tossed it to her in imagination. Or I walked the paths where we had walked and the meadow where we had run. If this is only the product of my distancing from reality or of emotional fragility, how is it that I felt so fulfilled? I do not even remember whether I wept. That is not distancing from reality — that is my reality. But that reality is not only within my world; it is also within the external world, where I left God, myself, and the world room for a new shared life, if such is foreseen for me. If not, I shall be content that I had a great love and ten years, and I shall be sorry I did not keep it better. I knew that the average mourning period was two years, especially if conducted through activity that was a little more intense — as

in some people, intensified passivity. I began running, decorating, training karate, winning a medal in honour of his sporting past, meeting new people and girls, however it might go. There I directed not only the pain but the life-energy onwards.

I came again to the edge of "falling" into hopelessness when at one in the morning I received a message from my future wife. I thought someone was disturbing me again and wanted to cut the contact, because she was older. But besides liking her modesty — that she had sent a completely unedited photograph (as on a mobile twenty years ago) — I was interested in her other qualities, her conciseness and decisiveness in arranging things, and I decided to give it a chance, the more so since we were going for coffee the next morning nearby. Through the advertisements they were all closed off, and I had reservations about "older girls" who had never married. But when I saw her aura and positivity at the coffee, everything went of itself. My initiatives were easy, without weighing courage, intrusiveness, cowardice. With a slight tremor and decisiveness we arranged everything, and the adventure began. I had thought it better that I had set the bar lower and expected only friendship and a little more, but we went towards marriage and unexpected heights. Precisely through this not-expecting (but not without desire), and through development, we received each other rather than the image of each other. And we found each other attractive too, which is equally important. So this was a pleasant surprise compared with girls who sent ever more beautiful photographs (as did I) in order to raise the impression — when in person it might be disappointment. One should give a chance in person too; but as soon as I showed disappointment, I had gone "in vain" to Zadar for that date.

From the other side, I remembered the girl from the dance whom at first I had liked and then suddenly liked ever less, for no clear reason. I now regarded my new wife Irma as a friend, and she was happy in the very fact that she supported me in my memories of my former wife, in filming our love, in open conversation. Just like "Elly" who remained 50 years married to Frankl and transcribed his writings of his memories of his first wife,

without the slightest jealousy. So Irma acted, and she was happy to be only the "supporting role" in my film (a real, literal one I was making) — but it did not stop there. Little by little she became the lead, precisely through that tolerance and non-resistance. She even allowed me (at first) to go on encounters with others and to keep searching. We were happy in every phase, and without expectations (concerning money, children, duration of the relationship) we grew continuously. It was she who finally asked me: "What are we waiting for? We could marry this spring." Many thought it premature, but the intense getting-to-know-one-another in a few months — much as with the previous girl and wife — is equivalent to years. We were older and had already adapted to a similar style of life, common life (not in tedium) and hobbies; there was no pressure, and no great wedding. The surroundings marvelled at this, and the court still more. But our marriage has endured. It bears witness for itself. And everything went so "easily".

Why did we wait so long, then? Not that we had not lived before — this way and that, freely and closed, into the details I shall not go — but we had never had real peace. Yet this does not negate the past love. Student love was for its own time, and it was the best for me. It was perhaps over-romanticised, but it gave me the years and the impetus to perform at the festival, attend seminars, graduate. Whether it would have been better had we married earlier or had children, I do not know. Would it have been only illusion? It does not matter to me. I am richer now. I have, in fact, two wives — but not in parallel. And in complete peace I can love each in her own time, as a person. That is why for the second anniversary I came again with Irma to Drivenik — but this time together. Life always knows more than we do, and so one must open to it just when it, like the world, seems most closed. There no one can help us, and rational conclusions and ideas about inner conflict help even less. But that too I have overcome — today my new wife has precedence and I love her qualitatively, but not quantitatively, more. My past wife, although "fading", remains the foundation; we are all linked. About her new life and her marriage I learned again through strange

paths whilst travelling with Irma, just as I learned of her brother's death through a chance chat with an old "acquaintance".

We are not "family", as my mother let slip when she said that to my father's lover. We are not "only" brothers and sisters, but important persons in each other's lives, who give love and learn from one another what (un)selfish love is. When Irma, in the house of my relative where my former wife had married and given birth, said that she would never leave me, that was not "deliberate", "planned", "vengeful", and least of all prompted by me — for I was telling her what had happened, not knowing that they knew better than I. That is why they asked: "Is that your second wife?" And I answered with a counter-question: "Who said she is the second?" By this she did not merely equalise the loves, introducing forgiveness and balance into our lives rather than hatred (as they had feared — which immediately struck me as emotionally odd), but she showed that divorce is not the "ideal type". That it is the exception that confirms the rule, not the rule itself. We had been less mature and idolised our love in past relations, or one party had always "run dry" in them — but that too was love, and could have remained love.

That I "loved" the girls more or apologised to them only when they were no longer there — I had been, in silence, seeing their value. But I had seen also that they were only people like me. A new love, too, even if from interest, can develop (through a child, shared concerns and goals). My grandparents nearly overcame an incomplete and instinctual love into a true partnership. But it always remained at some deep and odd friendship. With Irma, I am friend and partner and brother and boyfriend and husband — or lover. Through small expectations and great desires we received more than we expected. That I again ascribe to a higher power and to our flexibility. But this flexibility needs the right "timing", which the world often does not see and which cannot be had overnight.

My mother, like Elly or Irma, must have worked a great deal within herself to accept the lives of us men. But that work was not in resistance and burning-out. That is the integration rather than replacement; healing,

the new extended life; and the victory over death and severance without jealousy. Our similar stories are only the *ecstasy of meaning and of order*. How else would Frankl draw me, how would I have learned of him at all, although he was not the first I researched? How would our reflections and life-experiences coincide, even through different routes?

His camp was only a short part of his life, as was my secondary school where one classmate tormented me for four years, beat me, and stole my books. Similar things happened to my father and grandfather, of course. Out of fear I dared not resist, and so it was secretly fuelled. I endured with only small release valves. But I wept at home under the duvet, trembling from humiliation, because he had declared my bought book his own. It was not the book that mattered so much as that my mother had paid for it for me. So too with playing cards. I sought consolation in films and even "tried to live them" in reality — that was a little fantasy, like when at night I wanted to climb into the school. But I did no evil, and hatred lessened. That I felt spiritually compressed and allowed it within myself out of weakness, yes. But that was no excuse for not seeing a future, both in him and in myself. Camp, school, street are merely concentrations of life's strained relations. And in the decades that followed, my formation was greater and longer, though calmer and more stable — just as with Frankl.

My new marriage did not "wear out" but could only deepen and gain new ideas and life-missions, such as the two books I and Irma are publishing. Who knows who will one day continue my story? Surely someone will, but not necessarily. Our story is not an isolated island. When I pass through the city as my grandparents did when they were lodgers, or as my mother and father, I am conscious of my role and of my "passing" through this world, and of the youth and strength that is at its peak. But the melancholy and the joy of how I continue their path is not mere chance and mirroring; it is a deep tie greater than all the walls of the camp, hospital, school, or prison through which Frankl, Irma and I have all passed.

When I remember how my paternal grandmother "chose" between my grandfather and his best colleague and friend Ike, and chose my

grandfather (and probably made my life possible), she did not do it heartlessly — she took both under her arm and they walked, young and merry, down Ilica Street. Dear reader, what is deeper than the recognition that those same people would later end in early death on the road, in death amidst anxiety and quarrel, and in slow latent suicide? But that is not deep in its negation but in the beauty of the moment of innocence. And that moment is not for itself, and is not passing. It does not create the fear that the same awaits us. It is only one part of their magnificent life and of the pledge they have left to us. And of the eternal life that lives through us and independently of us.

I now know about them or about Frankl as about myself. I live my own and their life. I become — they, and they become me, because I keep them "alive" and in the meaning they themselves gave me. Taking up Frankl's method, I convert the greatest fall into the greatest victory. I, who was small or not yet born, mention, listen to, and know people whom today scarcely anyone will recall — even when it is a question of the "most famous" members of that society of the time. Or when it is a question of the less known, the more so. I have not merely continued their time; I have even leapt across it, and I return you to a time that has, relatively, passed long ago. But it is as fresh as I am fresh. We are only part of a chain.

I shall not, then, fight against forgetting, or single out time as a buried moment from which I do not move. I shall only magnify the past and the present, and through that recognition leave the future calmly to them, to myself, and to others, in full trust — for that is the proof that we are all connected and that we are not dead. And that our experiences, lives, and work are priceless each in themselves, and as continuations of magnificent stories. It is also a matter of impetus, example, upbringing, and choice. We influence and act before we know we are acting. What I write is in fact the least of it, not the most. I am not even a writer. I am only a witness.

For Frankl's **supra-meaning** is precisely his hardest synthesis. He saw his first wife as the *meaning* of survival. When she was gone he felt he had lost the meaning, and that at the end everything had been in vain and fiction.

But Elly was the link that joined it all together — or rather, God and their shared "YES" to the continuation of life. She was Catholic and he Jewish; and my wife too, though from a mixed marriage, has offered me every moral empathy and principle. So too my degree or membership in an association or possessions — everything we have invested in over years — can disappear through one "earthquake", literal or figurative. But precisely through loss we receive, and understand that there is no loss: in life everything is — added value.

WHY FRANKL DID NOT DIE OR "KILL HIMSELF" — AND SURVIVOR'S GUILT

Frankl did not regard himself as the stronger because he had managed. How then am I, as some kind of example of a clinically unstable person, to regard myself so? But what saved him was faith and visualisation. Not only faith in the possibility of getting out, of helping, or of seeing his wife and seeing her at every moment, but the fact that he *patched together* the remains of his book and scientific work. That is the supra-goal by which he extended his story and knowledge from before. Then he survived the same illness as his wife, because he was "more awake" and more concentrated. That is why my maternal grandmother outlived my paternal one: because at 97 she still made the bed when we arrived at midnight. My somewhat younger grandmother who died was no longer making it even for herself.

Naturally, Frankl claims that "the best of us went off", and I have said the same of my former brother-in-law. Not the strongest, not the happiest, but the morally best and perhaps weaker — which is no more "just". That is what destroyed him conceptually. But the story did not stop at the division between defeated and victors. It could have been any of us. The difference is great and small, but human life is not measured by comparison of action. It has a built-in absolute ontological value. Our survival is the survival of them too. I knew that my wife is in fact "weaker" in some things and

stronger in others, and that this division of roles was best in our life-rhythm. Moreover, she visited me in hospital when it was hardest for me. Later it was hard, painful, romantic — but not the hardest. The only moment when I felt almost lost was in the cold-store of the kitchen and in the holding-cell at the police station.

But then came — *angels*: two women. In the first case it was a "higher coordinator"; in the second a police inspector who strongly stood up for me — and as I have said earlier, she was divorced and her ex-husband bore my surname, so I was a live target for any eventual revenge of hers. They came at the moment when I thought I could no longer stay awake or have the strength to help myself. All my faith and struggle were vanishing in an instant. But they came at the right moment. They "ran" — deliberately or by chance — to save me from the moment. They neither knew me nor had to, and perhaps did not even know it themselves, and the newspapers know it still less, since positive small events go unmentioned. But how could I *not* carry as my *maxim*, at the bottom of my heart, love towards the human being, when I received grace where I had not expected it, from a stranger? It is easy to receive from family or from a girlfriend or a pet. But from a stranger? There is the key of life, and not in all the rest of the analysis, mine or Frankl's. We come into our role only when we give what we ourselves wish to receive. And both are pleasant.

"Love is the highest goal... And the moment when a person loses faith in the future, his spiritual force weakens, and he physically gives himself up and becomes the victim of illness", said Viktor Emanuel precisely. Perhaps his wife died of a "stampede", perhaps still earlier, but the **existential vacuum** and not-knowing saved even Frankl himself from drowning in what he feared and clearly diagnosed as a danger of premature death.³⁶ After the

³⁶ Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* was first published in 1946 in German as *Ein Psychologe erlebt das Konzentrationslager* ("A Psychologist Experiences the Concentration Camp"). The author refers throughout to its central concepts: *logotherapy*; the *existential vacuum*; *hyperintention* and *hyperreflexion*; and the position-taking faculty (*Einstellung*) of the prisoner. The phrase *odustajitis* — a Croatian coinage from *odustati* ("to give up") — is the author's rendering of the camp phenomenon Frankl describes, where prisoners who refused hygiene and movement and lay in their own waste died before being killed. The

war not everyone died at once from exhaustion. In the largest collecting camp in Europe over the next few years there were a thousand weddings and two thousand births. Life always goes on. Do we go with it? Here Nietzsche is right. When we know the "*what*" and the "*why*", we always know the "*how*" too. This does not mean fantasies or arrogant experiments but real life and Frankl's "laboratory of life" — as it was both in Auschwitz and in peace.

Apathy creates depression, then aggression and meaninglessness, I would say. Empathy creates hope, burning-out, and only then perhaps aggression. Apathy even "feeds" a person. It is one thing to refuse slavery — another, that depressive obstinacy and refusal of every cooperation and help, as my younger relative often drew attention to himself by playing "the greater victim than he was". Rarely does anyone have pure apathy — that is perhaps even a positive characteristic, except in persons who have it through opiates and other substances which dampen too much mood, stance, and danger. Worst perhaps is *acedia* and lethargy.

I feel more advanced now, though there remain objective challenges that can again provoke a return of anxiety. For instance, when the police rang me at 9 in the evening because of my deceased grandmother. I immediately asked myself: what do they suspect — that I had not cared for her, poisoned her, was rude to someone, broken the law? In the end it was the city's panic that no one would pay to remove the body. The moment something is outside procedure there is panic. They did not even call me first, but the police, though a few hundred euros are the smallest problem in the whole story. There was no problem later either, and my mother stepped in to help with the burial a day in advance. But precisely my concentration on the book as a remedy — on what I can keep in my heart

phrase "*give-up-itis*" is the closest English term subsequently coined by John Leach (Royal Society Open Science, 2018) for the same syndrome. Some scholars, notably Timothy Pytell (California State University, San Bernardino) in *The Missing Pieces of the Puzzle: A Reflection on the Odd Career of Viktor Frankl*, have argued that Frankl's stay in Auschwitz itself was only a matter of days before transfer to Kaufering and Türkheim. The author does not engage with this critical literature; he treats Frankl's account on its own terms.

as essential — kept me at a distance from the anxiety and depression that actually fasten on the less essential things.

EXISTENTIAL VACUUM AND FRANKL'S POSSIBILITY OF NOT BECOMING FRANKL — LIMITS OF BEHAVIOURAL TECHNIQUES AND SOME PERCENTAGE OF SURVIVAL

This is a key question, which he too recognised. I want at once to exclude *force majeure*, *accidents*, and situations in which the *physical laws* are not on our side. If we are still creators of our health, the case is as follows. When I calculated the various framework components of my "burnings-out" and my "instabilities" and the deep abysses within them, I saw that my survival has firmly and dynamically remained at about 60%. Many cognitive and behavioural techniques are directed at confrontation and acceptance. That is, of course, good, and the reduction of the **vacuum space** is trained. But although *determinism* is a feature both of freedom and of our historical state, it does not, by my reasoning, abolish them: we cannot be "Übermensch", but we must aspire to return or rise towards him. This does not mean there will be no vacuum. The vacuum cannot be "patched" by methods, consciousness, will, or medicine, because a vacuum is — a vacuum. That is its inherent feature.

When I quarrelled with the psychiatrists who carry out these techniques, I was not in a vacuum: I was in consciousness, with better or worse energy, firmly on the ground, even morally. The problem is when I am not "myself" or any patient is not "themselves" — then the question is who can help and how. The question is how long the vacuum lasts and how it affects the psyche, the life, the spirit. Take the following matrix of **existential seriousness** and **technical seriousness**:

◆Existential seriousness of "great" and "small" states (either state can be either: war — old age), and technical un-seriousness — collapse and depression.

◆Existential seriousness and technical seriousness — burning-out.

◆Existential un-seriousness and technical un-seriousness — madness, apathy, and collapse.

◆Existential un-seriousness and technical seriousness — the ideal, but often without *logos*.

My fifth option — and Frankl's — is striving to have technical seriousness and existential un-seriousness about everything except logos and morality (love, meaning, supra-meaning, ontological understanding).

The problem is that when one even attains this and does not depend on the state of productivity or unproductivity, this itself becomes a *magnet* and a *pressure*, and on a higher level. If this cracks and we show a weak point — and sometimes it does crack — the *gulf* is worse, because the skyscraper is the taller. We ontologically neglect *horizontal struggles* in their essence and "leap across the world", but enter the *vertical struggle* which in its fall has an infinite breaking of one level and another. Now it will seem that I, as a lawyer, am using my own or general psychological terms to play wise. No — I unfortunately live in the psychology of life over ten years since graduating, while with the law I have scarcely a tenth of the time.

This was seen especially when prisoners or Frankl lost the final meaning of their survival in the camp — the meeting with family, an ordered society, a former love. The more so when the *banality of problems* is added, those that meet such people, as they met my grandmother, in complete peace and old age. If even this banality is recognised and "defeated", the question remains: how much do these vacuums and the mature elevation and infinite reminder of meaning or super-construction of meaning *damage meaning itself*? Here I emphasise phenomena and not concepts.

Damages in the fall affect the fall of bodily health too. But height is, fortunately, *syntropic and exponential*. So the higher the floor of the

skyscraper and the more amortisation from falls — both those who wait below and above you — there is, in spite of *vertigo*, a smaller chance that we shall even "decide" to fall. Anything is better than torpor. The "devil" hurries to catch us, and we are in fact swiftest when we think we are slowest. Not merely because of experience that points us to old successes and patterns, but because *logos* itself returns to us and raises the percentage. We can no longer and do not wish to give up, because those areas are still worse and more unknown, even though these here seem infinitely far and dangerous.

I write this after a cactus stung me — which can carry dangerous fungi and bacteria. That struck me most. While I work out ontology and *logos*, an ordinary cactus throws me off-balance and returns me temporarily to depression. Fortunately, with me, it lasts briefly. But these are already hundreds upon hundreds of small victories and defeats. That is *existential fatigue* and the *exhaustion of turning banalities into logos and small cuts through life*. That *air-cushion of logos* does not save from all side-effects and dangers, but it holds the helm. **Ontological arrhythmia** is a better expression than *psychic instability*, which none of us wants. But do we desire it for growth? Yes, but only within bearable limits. There is a danger that I will become an "embittered serviceman" and physically live shorter than someone with a weaker spirit — that is, a spirit directed only at the body and not at logos. That frightens me. I try both, but hierarchically, and it costs and demands a rest one often lacks. The *chain reaction of meaning* and connection grows in parallel with the *chain reaction of trauma*. One does not justify the other, let alone evil or death — but they are inseparably linked. Today's therapy is directed at symptoms and treatment and not at *phenomena* and ontology. Meaning is often mentioned, but only as some vague and passing "important" item. The problem remains in our approach.

I know that the proof of meaning and love in this life no one can take from me, and I have it already even should everything stop. But I want to use it to the maximum: to write the book, to live for my wife and family, and to go into the "*other extreme of depression*". It is not the "accidental"

who survive, but the long-term victors in a heap of small victories. But those victories have a cost. There is a song, "*I don't know why but I love to see you cry*". Yesterday I lost my temper a little in the shop with my wife, and after she gave back the same measure, she simply looked at me like a child and wept quietly, gently, with complete innocence. Not only from empathy, but from the *observation of the phenomenon*, I was completely broken — because such purity of gaze, of soul, of attachment and trust towards me, that I was petrified and ashamed. I was not "defeated", disarmed; I really saw what greater stage she is at, and that her spirit is higher than mine. She has even tended to gain weight because she "relaxed" with me. That is maximum trust, with perhaps the danger of attachment.

I love her at least as much, and do not fear separations, but my general worries make me "thin" and even attractive, but seated and exhausted. I cannot permanently relax. I am constantly in *ontological stress*, resolving a heap of existential questions — even successfully (?!). I hold both a bomb and gold in my hands. But she is not in my way of that, not a victim of it; she has found her own logos and her own maximum and has peace. I, although close and not letting her out of mind and attention, am still "hungry" and craving — obligations, duties, success, or the salvation of us all. I do this no longer deliberately, for the alternative use of time. I have to separate this at once in this "*second phase of the dark night of the soul*". But whilst as a small boy I had a strange feeling of pleasure at a little girl who was crying, here I sensed a completely other world that cannot even be touched or further "opened". It was a world that revealed itself to me — the world of pure love and of an honest soul and emotion, regardless that her being need not be perfect in its totality. Here I felt no exaggerated guilt (which is also no good), nor sadness, nor anger, nor pleasure, nor redemption. It was the feeling of being *caught short* — how far behind I am from her spirit. The feeling of **marvel** at how a being, a woman and a soul, has complete openness towards me, without the least fear and calculation, and without the desire for meaningless struggles over wishes. It was not even that once sad provocation — "Go on, attack me and insult me" — but a static gaze that in its depth simply divides worlds. And more: it shows that her

intention was unselfish from the start. I am convinced that there is not a single person in the world who could have any reaction or exploitation of such a state of another. You simply remain caught short. That is not weeping, not wailing, not begging, not pity that smells of weakness or stirs urges. She was like a *child* — not one who cries and rages, but the quiet honest child — and you then have no room for anything, neither anger, nor flattery, nor analysis: you have no answer. Because it is an unknown and metaphysical world. I think even psychopaths could do nothing — not out of emotional understanding of the situation but cognitive: they too would see a completely different and not in the least calculated deep state of a being. It is such *sanctity* of state that you, not only do not wish, but cannot bring your will into it in any positive or negative way. Because it is a state *per se*. We are all in a state of neurosis, interest, emotion, ideals, experience — and this is a state of "*I am as I am*". *Observe me and I observe you*.

For the end: vacuum creates too many *plasters* on the body and even on the spirit, but in the totality of our being, work on *logos* is unconquerable. The only question is collateral (un)success. If I were to calm down and know that everything is over or that I am dying, I would remember only that gaze. Or the gaze of my mother and father in childhood, of my paternal and maternal grandmothers, of my grandfather, of my psychiatrist, of my wives, of my friends, of idols and pets, and of the breeze in sunlit nature. I would say without the slightest bitterness — *La vita è bella*. And I would add, as my former Latin teacher says: *Ma che bella, bellissima!* For me, my **end of collapse** is foreseen at about **10–20%**. But I fear only the path between, and the fact that the *depth of fall* in that percentage is *compressed and disproportionately greater* on all levels than the average fall, and confuses the ontological system and freedom as such. That recognition both scandalises and motivates me. As long as I have no apathy — I am in life. And as long as I have unease — I am in struggle and formation. The question is only — between *burning-out, work, and surrender*. I want ever less to write and to learn, and ever more to know and to live. But my success at the goal — like Frankl's — is not defined by today or yesterday. It

is defined by the entry into the laboratory of life: that is, into the camp. And by each subsequent day of survival, or rather of LIFE, in the camp of reality.

The same author emphasises that the camp is not far from "real life", so I need not fear this somewhat pretentious thesis of mine; and that man's "inner values" cannot be damaged by something like the camp, and that a "trace of spiritual freedom" can always be preserved in every moment of choosing decisions. Consoling others is often a consoling method by which one can defend oneself from one's own apathy and irritability.

UNEMPLOYMENT AS A PROBLEM AND THE QUESTION OF THE MEANING OF JOBS

Don **Stojić** needed to tell me that all my questions and depressions were conditioned by *unemployment*, and that for my case there would have to be two jobs a day. From the other side there were people and priests who marvelled that I was willing to work "outside my profession". But unemployment was not always the same as "idleness". For why should work at home not count just as much for men, if we set aside the complex of reversed roles? Often it was the feeling of frustration and meaninglessness that was present, more than laziness, because laziness must be "kissed" like an addiction — then I would enjoy that state. And again I cannot settle everywhere. Frankl would call this deformed expectations of oneself and of society, because every work is regarded through "usefulness". Otherwise, he says, we are not far from Hitler's euthanasia programme. Even such a eugenicist criminal project I understand by its motives; I understand less the criteria for "quality" of life. People often look at semi-slave work eight hours a day as quality of life. I admire them, knowing this is a matter of habit and strength, since otherwise they would not survive.

The greater problem of unemployment is, beyond the stigma and one's own sense of powerlessness, what Frankl recognised as "**deformed time and provisional existence**". This holds true in the camp and in the home-

camp. Although the Pandemic crisis over-emphasised the evil of confinement at home and domestic violence, the problem is in fact human unpreparedness for **home peace and home unrest**. That unrest is not in "government measures", the curfew, the spouse, or the end of the world. I use both expressions deliberately, because on the one hand staying at home or with a book and exercise should be the best rest from the world or preparation for life — and on the other hand, in that confinement even the strongest can fall into crisis, because stasis is not natural to a person. My suicidal attempts and flights in 2010 were precisely from accumulated stasis at home, and from study and waiting for "life". But the solution is neither in flight nor in non-confrontation with oneself at home. How is it that I wanted to kill myself at home, whilst someone in the camp did not? On the other side, the fear of going out and struggling is, as Frankl says, "the fear of going to the dentist, not knowing the worst part has already passed".

Those who in the Nazi camps refused hygiene and work died before they could be punished and killed. Not only that, but they — like my paternal grandmother in the house — had their concentration only on *smoking cigarettes* and instant pleasures at the expense of even the need for food, movement, and washing. Frankl heard this from American soldiers and called it the problem of *odustajitis* — "give-up-itis". It is suicide whichever way one turns it, and the most dangerous enemy. They, like my grandmother, decided to remain in their own urine and excrement, to sleep, and to ask to be left in peace and to die. There they were firm and unshakable, whilst my father, locked rigid on the floor, tried and waited hours to move a centimetre. He had the other extreme of the need for life — the physical and mechanical. But that physical also moves a spirit which in him is equally inert, because he wants to work like someone who does not want to. About my grandmother I marvel, because she spent most of her life nearly in retirement, but there she had many domestic occupations which little by little she began to "cut".

I, in hospital, gained a surge of life in every way, so that it even looked as though I were acting. Because I saw I was in some "filmically important"

status and part of life, and that my struggle "against" the system and even against myself, and the desire to get out, had to be directed maximally towards pure positivity and wakefulness. I did not want to act, but truly to be disciplined and optimistic for release. I always went to the gym, enjoyed listening to advice and helping the lads, to the library, on walks. I could hardly wait for rounds and for going to tests and conversations, and at the same time I awaited "escape" and despised the possibility that I had been objectified, misunderstood, or "persecuted". Both stances were in fact constructive, not destructive.

Sleeping with people who snore or "break wind" was not a problem to me, as it was at home with my parents. So too in the holding-cell it was no problem to be among them all, except that I feared going to the shared squat-toilet, where everyone would hear or see me. A person adapts quickly to lower conditions. There I am even similar to my father. But one also adapts quickly to returning to freedom. The only question is how we know how to bear both sides, and how much the certainty of an end to one's vulnerability is impetus and burden "with a deadline". One man offered me *pâté* there. Mostly they were some night-time offenders at the Trešnjevka station. Ten of us in one room. I likewise could hardly wait for them to call me out in the morning, and the sleep was unusually calm and quick, although the surface was hard. But that sense of mutual shame, silence, and respect for the situation we were in was actually fascinating. We were all silent as though awaiting a death-sentence, and no one spoke with anyone. It was mostly a transit holding-cell, not detention proper. Life in prison is already life under different rules in a kind of closedness within freedom. There, mercifully, I have not been, and I was always horrified by it, because the whole concentration, as in school or the camp, is on survival alone and not on creating or getting to know one's full self. It is extraordinary how the prison pulls one to freedom, and freedom to the prison.

Whilst today's system "forbids" suicide, in the camps the difference was that the system forbade — the prevention of suicide. And against latent and

slow suicides Frankl always emphasised the particularity of the relation towards life and of life towards us, and the particularity of the mission or project we must finish, because "no one else will". This can apply to the book written by him, or by me, or by Petar Janjić.³⁷ For sometimes one has the feeling that one had to live through and survive everything to ennoble and awaken the reader, to teach from first hand. The real lived half-hell, or the read one, gives an extraordinary turn in consciousness: that everything else is light and beautiful, and that there is always a solution to a problem.

Later Frankl established similar things in peace, working with over ten thousand patients. People think that therapy must have certain methods, or, as the court expert thinks, must be an imperative in my recovery — and they do not see that the collective itself, and therapy itself, is something that heals by itself, because it brings together people who are otherwise distant. In group work I saw that even those with rebellious inclinations controlled them very easily and were interested in what others were saying, and did not want to disturb the order. What is astonishing is not only the level of control but the placebo and the minimal effort that people put in, or receive, to set their spirit in motion. The task is wholly unimportant, and still less the theory the social worker or psychologist spoke about when we were at a session in hospital. What matters is that the task *exists*. Someone enjoyed being able to solve it; another, the fact that there was a task at all; a third knew that one must put one's spirit under discipline, without knowing this was what they were doing. A person who ceases to be either a pupil or a teacher in life will never be happy, because that process is always cyclical. In nursery we always taught the younger group and were taught by

³⁷ Maximilian **Kolbe** (1894–1941), Polish Conventual Franciscan friar, canonised in 1982; volunteered to take the place of a fellow prisoner, Franciszek Gajowniczek, in the starvation bunker at Auschwitz, and was eventually killed by lethal injection of carbolic acid. Edith Stein (1891–1942), German Jewish philosopher and Carmelite nun, canonised in 1998; killed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau, August 1942. Otti Berger (1898–1944), Croatian-Jewish Bauhaus textile artist born in Zmajevac, died at Auschwitz. Petar **Janjić**, a Croatian author whose Holocaust testimony the author of this book has read alongside **Frankl**. Oleg Mandić (b. 1933), referenced earlier — the last child to leave Auschwitz alive, on 27 January 1945. Otti Berger's connection to the Bauhaus is the source of the author's mention of "the entire Bauhaus school".

the assistants and the older groups. We were never only children, nor only adults. As adults we forget the basics of social, spiritual, and biological law. No problem lasts „long“, but ethics are maybe related to the Being anyway.

THE CAMP AS MERE TRANSITION? TOWARDS WHAT?

Frankl believed that the camp experience was not “the worst thing that happened to them” — that this was how they were to think about it. But here lay a painful question. Will something worse happen if we relativise the worst? Will we banalise suffering? Frankl’s position was bold, almost provocative, and yet it carried weight precisely because he had been in the camp himself. Coming from anyone else, it would have been intolerable. Coming from him, it became a philosophy.

If the camp is only a transition, then towards what? Towards meaning, Frankl would say. Towards the freedom to choose one’s attitude in any circumstance. Towards the survival of the human spirit even where the body is broken. I agree with much of this — but I add that the transition is not only inward, toward attitude, but also outward, toward a different mode of being-toward-eternity. The camp does not have the last word, because death itself does not have the last word. That is my addition to Frankl, perhaps my disagreement with the strictly empirical reading.

Yet I do not wish to make the camp into a metaphor. The camp was the camp. People died, people were tortured, people lost everything. To call it “only” a transition risks dishonouring them. The “only” here must be read with extreme care: it does not mean that the suffering was small, but that it was not the final word about who those people were. Their final word was their dignity, their humanity, their meaning. The camp tried to take that from them — and in many cases it failed.

LIFE'S COMPARISONS — A FORMER BROTHER-IN-LAW, VILLAGE GOSSIPS...

I, however, said to my late former brother-in-law that those wounded in the field were the real example for life — to which he answered that everyone has his own cross. I did not believe him, and thought him arrogant; I told him not to mock the veterans who at our age went through real hell (he mocked them in reality also). Through everything he was going through, the good and the bad, the forgivable and the unforgivable — but often banal — he died within a few years. And he was a strong and still honest fellow. That shook and frightened me when I learned. I did not even want to analyse whether this was the karma and curse of my former wife's family with their heaps of carcinomas, polyps, and other problems. Had they been suffering or talking about me as the cause or consequence of all our bad characters? It does not matter. I shall not say that no one deserves to die young, or that this is chance, or that my life is more thoughtful and meaningful because I live longer. I shall not say it is less meaningful, nor that their family without a male heir is breaking up, nor that it is in vain to have children or that one should have as many as possible.

Rather, alongside empathy and awe — and concern for myself — I remembered his sentence in answer to my comparison. After that he did not answer the messages. I did not know it then and thought he had "capitulated" under my comparison. But I realised in an uncanny way that I had been wrong to compare lives. Though I had not directly compared his. While those young men often survived around Vukovar, he died young and strong and had likewise an invisible cross. In his own bed and in his own house — under unexplained circumstances. His future too was extinguished, and his suffering was chronically latent — I saw it alongside his sensitivity, his frequent provoking of disorder out of unguardedness, vomiting from drink. Even at our wedding he did not restrain himself, but slept through the first part of the wedding because of drink. He was not a drunkard or an idler. He was even stronger than I, and yet always had — or wanted to have — respect, though it was I who spent time in "his" house

and worked on "his" land and not on mine, and ate constantly in their kitchen. I saw too that irresponsible streak and lack of interest in details and in my own past or home. But he bore no malice; he was broken. He never married, and often loved small details which to me seemed benign — raising chickens, gathering mistletoe. These are subtle things which are not visible, and which mean that lives cannot be compared as cattle on the scales — though one may have an opinion about a way of life, analyse it, follow it; we all do, and that is normal up to a point.

"WHAT IF" — DEFORMATIONS OF TIME AND THE LIFE-LABORATORY

Frankl held that their camp experience was not "the worst thing that happened to them", or rather, that they had to think that way. But there came a painful question: would not something worse happen if the camp were survived? Yes, it did happen — the confrontation with the lost family, with the lost future (which Frankl mentions as the greatest danger), with a lost or apathetic society, a new illness, war, or death. Was that a reason to perish earlier? Frankl emphasised to his patients, and I to myself as my own therapist: "What if you are exactly that one-in-a-thousand and great success and happiness awaits you? Is it not worth being patient and seeing?" But people ask what if it does not await. Again, it is the matter of position. Frankl decided to win in the war but also in peace. Is that not example enough? People did not read his books for the theory — as he himself admits — but for the authenticity and the fact that people most admire the victory of suffering and the dignity of the victor.

On one side I understand when my father, on returning from the war, marvelled at the bad relations in families, and at the trouble of people in the tram negotiating about bill payments. On the other side, I marvelled when a film critic once judged that I had shown my "strong" person and character through my story and biography. How strong, if I was precisely "boasting" of weak sides, and the only thing I had managed was — to

survive and accept causes and consequences? But that is the difference, that the same person is both weak and strong, both right and wrong, depending only on the time. To me this was both an "insult" and an accurate diagnosis. But it is no great strength. It is only the acceptance that "there is always far worse", and that in everything there is meaning. Frankl would say I had discovered the recipe that holds everywhere — even in going to the gas chamber. That this is a greater heroism than the struggle against the worst enemies.

But I did not want to be patient, therapist, writer, hero, or loser. I wanted only to be "normal". And what does it mean now, that I am happy because I will "use" my experience and knowledge so as to be admired? Or that I will additionally shame myself? No. Could I choose, I would choose that there had been neither of these. But if there has already been — then better to make something useful and active, since work and creativity are perhaps fundamental features of the human being. Even destruction is a form of creativity, or a cry for it. Would we and people know ourselves without the experiences? Probably not. Does the entry ticket to our personality, intelligence, or any capacity have to be some suffering? Frankl agrees with me that it need not. But suffering is a magnifying glass under which we more easily observe ourselves and others observe us.

Reading him or Petar Janjić, I did not see only martyrs and heroes. I saw really young, uncorrupted, gentle young men with high capacity for empathic and intellectual work — whom paradoxically no one would have recognised had they not gone through what they did. Yet anyone who would wish to go through this, or only to puff himself up by it, would automatically not be respected. Precisely that sincere wish that there had been no such books and events gives the value. Yet that value is not so that one may be popular, nor that all should be interested, because our lives are individual; people will understand it as much as they will not, and it will interest them as much as it will not. That too is logical. Our books are in fact our conversation with life, with ourselves, with God, and with the past. It is entirely the same whether anyone reads them.

So Frankl often says that "*the past*" is our safest base and **existence**. But of times and ontology we shall speak later. I see, however, that his theses are "my theses" and not the reverse. Most people think and say: "Aha, he has read Frankl and now copies his theses." No — I had theses, and then read Frankl and saw that they coincide with mine. With some other books I saw they did not coincide, and again this is the sign that, with mutual criticism and supplement, the greatest value is precisely that none of those books is a copy. But lives often are a *copy of similarity but not of sameness* — to express it that way.

THE BODY HAS FEWER INHIBITIONS THAN THE MIND

Frankl's thesis from *Man's Search for Meaning* is quite accurate, for he observed how the body endures and then suddenly eats without end. I noticed the same after my fast, although priests and others always feared lest I "fast too much". But as soon as a person eats so much, as people did after the camp, it means the will to live is there. Worst is when food is refused, in illness or as my grandmother in old age before death. No one saw that a few years earlier she had ordered and eaten enormous amounts. Food is not the only need of the body — it is also "speech" and writing, as Frankl says. But the mind and the control of the spirit need far more will and are far more stretchable.

JUSTIFYING ONE'S EVILS BY OTHERS' AND THE COMPARISON OF SUFFERING

Frankl is quite right when he says that many of the oppressed became oppressors. Many camp prisoners were people and swine alike, as were the guards. This destruction of dichotomy has not, to this day, been favoured in society. He went still deeper and said that people who threatened that they would "bloody their hand" at home or in society after liberation were not bad people. And that even the worst — the executors of euthanasia in the

gas chambers — were reportedly very empathic in prison afterwards. Black and white are mixed so much that they are linked but not necessary. The relation towards oneself and towards life was the key problem, not the relation towards politics. Extraordinary creation and release of pressure was only an additional trigger, but not something "unnatural". So he made fellow prisoners more aware than he engaged in globalising and shifting, or analysing at all, the causes of guilt of the Nazi ideologues.

READINESS FOR HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS, AND SUICIDE

Frankl said that those who survived had been ready for everything but not for unhappiness. There is that feeling which I too often have — that however we run after life as a cart, it always escapes a step ahead. But Frankl's point is not in reaching and overtaking life but in continuing to run! For life is, fortunately, both finite and infinite, and this is in fact a card that runs in our favour and not on the side of life and death or evil. Not every conflict is neurotic, nor is psychosis the cause of a state, he too maintains. The existential vacuum of which he speaks, and of which we speak in other places, creates the break in existential tension and the possibility of suicide. A wound burns most when it cools and when we stop. Is the solution to run always, or to accept the cooling of the wound? Many philosophers and scientists say that the question is often more important than the answer, which in any case depends. Happiness is something we want and something that means it belongs to us — but time is often an enemy and the source of philosophical discussions.

Yet he offers a psychological counsel: *let us look at the present as our past already, and as an opportunity for a re-sit examination*. There is no worse suffering than regret. Frankl often speaks of "dying" rather than death, which accords with my own research. A human being is "a monument of his own existence", though I would say more than a monument. Alongside the concepts and paradoxes of *hyperintention*,

hyperreflexion, anticipation, and the questionability of cause and consequence of act and trauma, Frankl approaches even my later ontological position — and I see this only now near the end (since I did not write the chapters in order). He said he had moved the boundary from "What grandma wanted, grandma dreamed", to "What grandma wanted, grandma got". I would move it from the will, logos, and phenomenon to: "What grandma dreamed — grandma already is". That is the radical, but not over-new — only courageous, mad, and direct — entry into ontological extremity and truth, which more and more unites instead of separating science fiction from reality. After all, the question of reality has been spoken of through other theories about illusions. Yet our mind is a vessel that is truly unanswered, and the greatest value is that patients can learn from doctors and professors and the other way round.

TRAUMA AND MISFORTUNE AS A "DESIRE"

Whilst everyone today is concerned with how much we wish to inflict trauma and misfortune on other beings, nature, or people, it is often forgotten that we wish trauma on ourselves. Not only in the sense of injuring or traumatising oneself, which is always in question, but we want — the *consequence* and the *label* of trauma, which is often our screen for further negative or positive activity, and for self-pity, manipulation, and the trump card of weakness. That is often at a subconscious level. My father, when he constantly mentions how he was beaten in his youth, often *wants* that to be his reality which shapes him. That is why Professor Krajačić well observed his dissociations, and my father was even delighted with the professor's conversation and knowledge, although he neither understood nor read the findings. One would have said he had accepted him more objectively than I, and without offence — but he had not. He is not even interested in the label nor in the consequence of that finding, in which it was written "latent aggressiveness". What interested him is his own obsession with traumas.

Again and again he repeats childhood traumas — and although they did affect the brain, after I have been alive I have noticed a hundred other traumas and pleasures he has lived through, and others he has not lived through but has inflicted on others. My mother truly bore without resentment the problem of his infidelities, but when he banalised and belittled and lightly bandied about words of love, hatred, and the "existence or non-existence" of their marriage, he was additionally crossing the line of dignity. The problem of today is that man either philosophises too little or too much. My mother is not without faults, and I have often quarrelled with all of them and shouted in others' houses. So it is not for us to "judge" — but it is for us to diagnose and say: "see, this example is not good, so neither should you do it." That is what Jesus said too, not "punished" or unconditionally forgave. He is not the one who sent the devils (or measles, as Frankl's daughter says) and then drove them away. Devils, evils, and people are exclusively our products. I forgot this when I wanted to kill myself and laid the blame on God. Lie.

Someone with less sex can have more infidelity or lack of love than someone who is dissolute but faithful in the heart. But neither is good. The eye sees only one, however, and so it was in my case. Now the "lasting infidelity" of my former wife with the relative who came to my house and to the wedding is treated as something "legal and clean". But the law does not exclude truth and justice — it is simply incomplete. Psychology and philosophy develop because they are incomplete and not complete. So my father has "embraced" the role of victim, and the lover too, and my mother fights against being a victim and they all "push" her in that direction. These are not solutions. My father was one who waited to come home to his own toilet and his own bed and to drink a Coca-Cola or to sit in the wheelchair — so he had the minimum of desire. Something wonderful soon turned into the greatest dissatisfaction and routine when he attained it. But at least he got to that toilet and stood on his feet despite his illnesses. Because one part of his spirit loves life very much. But the other destroys it.

In my family each had a different spirit and different problems. Grandfather and grandmother were only partners their whole life. But no one was black or white. Yet one thing was common to us all: we built and killed our own relationships and our own life most of all by ourselves. Although others built and killed us too, but not to the measure that we did ourselves. So our relation to being and life is the only and key problem, because all crises and states have passed and our problems have remained.

PSYCHOSIS — OR REAL REALITY AND PERSONALITY?

Frankl himself says that "psychosis does not touch even the core of the personality" and that life is nonetheless hard, and optimism often tragic. He, too, is against the *new-age direction* that has dragged on for half a century: only "be happy", fight for freedom, emancipation, equality, enjoy the life that is yours alone. The *neurosis of unemployment*, from regarding work only through the prism of money — even before the church court — is all the wrong direction. Happiness and joy are even biblically two separate things. Emancipation begins in ourselves and does not mean complete freedom. Today all struggles are directed against the world and not against what is within us. Sometimes it is only declared that this is important, while underneath there is still hidden the desire for power, righteousness, popularity, or worldly peace. Peace in the world is not a bad thing even if attainable, but it cannot come from outside but from within. Those who are victors from within do not feel bitterness, and if they do, they are neither seen nor heard. Often the fighters against violence are the greatest "violators". Unhealthy personality often has no diagnosis, and a noble concern for life and the world is filed in the "bin" of humanity where "weirdos" gather. How is it that I did not see weirdos in the "madhouse" but educated, cultivated people who did not even complain, but counselled one another, and who least of all insulted or quarrelled? I never wanted to go back to hospital, and now it would be new lads — but in that acute and even long-term ward I was drawn by the cohesion, respect, and a kind of

peace in that world. Not the peace of the yellow wall colour or the medicines, but that part of the spirit that has truly developed, freed itself, and harmonised with nature, society, and the human being.

Would I lie if I said there are more mad people outside than within? But that no one is wholly mad and evil because of this. Rather, we look at natural laws differently and at different times. But those laws even keep us under control so that some order rules until we come to recognition. Recognition is always inclusive, not exclusive. It is always synthesis, not the dissolution of society, any society. Synthesis is not an idea — synthesis is the precondition of truth and progress. As Frankl says, suicide would be *overcome* by the will to life and meaning, even when suicide is not the fruit of meaninglessness.

FRANKL'S OR MY FACTORS OF LIFE

What are the main factors that make life and being and not the opposite? He maintains — and I agree, that is, this is what I had thought:

- *creativity and work* (of any kind; that is why I am glad when my doctor does not "force" me to do anything, nor encourages idleness)
- *experience and persons*
- *love*

Again it will seem that I invent that my theses through the book are mine, before I read anything from psychological or psychiatric literature. Just as that the fact a person is unhappy is often either over-emphasised, or one "punishes a person for being unhappy" and isolates them or offends them through countless diagnoses, even unintentionally. Or shallow and formal solutions are offered. But not all are like this. Some only want to get the matter done over *zoom* or therapy, and some throw themselves to the end into the patient's life, though they must of course have a healthy and defensive distance. Nothing is as dramatic as in a film, and everything is yet more dramatic.

My "millennium" generation I most often meet at check-ups, greeting them or joking with them. For we have remained in between and are often misunderstood. But we are therefore not "pitiful". We have a power no one has — knowledge and youth still. But everything has its cost, and that is normal. The worst is that we did not and do not know what years bring. I shall surely have similar positions but quite different experiences and elaborations in 20 years, just as this my book is different from the previous one. "The world is in a bad state" — truly. One must not, in Frankl's view, foster illusions. But the future is not necessarily bad, meaningless, and final. My paternal grandmother said only a minority reaches a hundred. And my maternal grandmother, who in two years will celebrate that, says: "Then we will roast a pig and call the newspapers." She has her neuroses, but moves around, is cheerful and wise and experienced and full of memories through two wars and several states. She lives at the edge of a dying village, often alone, but persistent and content. She has only four classes of elementary school. She does not know all the politics, but she has seen life's things first-hand.

The older neighbours with whom I associated in the village and visited surrounding sensitive and lovely places — they taught me more than all at the schools, and I shall love them forever. How many times did a neighbour lend me a bicycle? That was to me a greater paradise than all the mobile phones, and I am not so old. At sunset, to imagine songs and love and pass through former war terrain, looking at and smelling nature and loving all those who lived and danced or studied there together with my mother — regardless that the school was later also a collecting camp. But that gives positive, not negative, weight to life, and a side phase. For my chief thing was — a hundred times to climb sweating with the bicycle to the top of the slope, and then to descend quickly through the wind in such pleasure and flight that I felt like a bird, the happiest man in the world. I must be mad, talking about how a bicycle ride 15 years ago was one of the loveliest experiences of my life in my mother's Vrpolje near Knin. And how mad, then, are my mother or grandmother, who rejoiced at weeping in the snow whilst walking kilometres from school, or at one cube of chocolate for the

weekend, or at the baby they made from wood and finally gave away — or at the bicycle my uncle made from shoe-polish boxes? A minority did experience a hundred, true; my maternal grandmother is right. But Frankl says: let us be that minority and join it.

All those mentioned went through the same Second World War, and recounted to me the adventures of their playful, heroic, and fearless spirit — but all ended differently. My village grandmother is alive, while the other is not, nor are my grandfathers. The second, silent grandfather tried to walk and fell, and that was no pure suicide, while the first did it out of quarrel with my grandmother and frequent competing with everyone. The paternal grandmother I write about often fell in will after ninety, and had been through "worse things" than ninety years. And this neighbour bore up adroitly and excellently to 85. Then suddenly he collapsed and walked stooped and unrecognisably.

Oleg Mandić still holds up, because Auschwitz remained for him, as for Frankl, an *eternal warning* but also an *injection of reality*, so that he "marvels and rejoices" at everything after it, to this day. He had luck inside and out, but the self-perception of a man who with pride "closes the camp last" and is among the last to hold this life — keeps him in better state than many who lived through neither the camp nor 95 years. Does that mean that the camp is a cure or a hospital, the divorce, the unemployment, and the holding-cell as in my case? Of course not. But how many of us would "with joy" go to Auschwitz knowing that there await us people like Oleg Mandić, Viktor Frankl, Maximilian Kolbe, Edith Stein, Otti Berger,³⁸ and a

³⁸Op.cit.

heap of unknown heroes? If we knew we would be sharing cells with them, who would not seize such an opportunity? Is the whole Bauhaus school and faculties they or we have attended worth more than the school of dignity which they taught others around them, and themselves, and generations after them and their lives? But they were only "ordinary" people, eager for life in all conditions. It is easier to die in good company than to live in bad — without the least pathetic exaltation.

Some went straight to paradise (not to death); some collapsed afterwards; some, like Frankl, lived long. But it was all the same war and the same camp, different and similar fates. We need not try to live a hundred years, but let us try at least 120, which is the "life expectancy", or at least the average of about 80 which my father with two heavy illnesses will, it seems, reach. Or at least 90, as my "lazy heroes" — grandmother, grandfather, and the neighbour — have reached. This life passes quickly even at 80 years. Why, then, the impatience?

CHAPTER III: SYSTEMIC QUESTIONS

FOR THE SYSTEM AND NOT AGAINST IT — ANALYSIS FROM WITHIN AND THE EPISTEMIC 'GAP'

This part will be directed at the old and new problem of bureaucracy and the (mutual) discrepancy between the knowledge of citizens, of that bureaucracy itself, and of those who construct it. Of **Durkheim's** strictly succinct but essential typology I have already spoken at the outset; and the more so, since through other disciplines we have come to recognise that "society" itself is one of the chief factors influencing suicide and depression — more precisely, that the socially-conditioned suicide is the most frequent type. We are social beings, and although the individual is the small unit of society and contaminates it with their own indiscipline and self-interest, the new generation of individuals is not, of course, responsible for all the burdens (and advantages) of the old; here we often become "victims", but that is later philosophical terrain and the need to recognise that it is both fortune and misfortune that we are all born into certain crises, illnesses, and cyclicalities, as well as into advantages other generations did not have. Once again, then, one must take a "position" and try to bring to consciousness the cure or the meaning, and this is the most important.³⁹

For the human being is a being who can spoil something even in ideal conditions, and mend something in bad ones. The question is only who

³⁹Émile **Durkheim** (1858–1917), *Le Suicide* (1897), classical typology of suicide as anomic, egoistic, altruistic, and fatalistic; the structural-functional analysis remains a standard reference. On the rough 6% rise in suicide for each 1% rise in unemployment in major recessions: Stuckler and Basu, *The Body Economic: Why Austerity Kills* (Basic Books, 2013); a meta-analytic update in *Molecular Psychiatry* (2020) gives a similar order of magnitude. Robert K. Merton, "Social Structure and Anomie", *American Sociological Review* 3 (1938), reissued in *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Free Press, 1996 reprint). Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Zero Books, 2009); Fisher died by suicide in January 2017. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Polity, 2000), and *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Polity, 2004). Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Semiotext(e), 2009), and *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (Verso, 2015). Pierre Bourdieu on *symbolic violence* as embedded in institutions: *The Weight of the World* (Stanford UP, 1999, original 1993).

"loves" that game and how much choice we have, but whole analyses of the system of society and the mechanism of society are outside this book. They are not even so important, because they are infinite, but they come to similar problems — from which I would single out bureaucracy as one of the foundations of the dissatisfaction and failure of the young (here I mean bureaucracy from school onwards). I emphasise, too, the necessity (I will not say of suffering) of rules, of moderate changes, but primarily of oneself rather than of social revolutions whilst we have not even built ourselves up. The more so, since the goal is not attainable but a lasting process; we have, in fact, no "right" to great changes but only to subtle ones, and that is the essence of *progressive conservatism, or liberalism*, take it as you wish. Even if we were ideal and the rules were ideal and material goods the only good, the question would still remain how — in a democratic, consensual, and functional way — to approach it, and not through violence. That I leave to sociologists, political sociologists, and politicians.

I will single out only a summary and compilation of such questions. For in my view today the problem is no longer *lack of specialisation* (particularly in Croatia) — it is surplus! Because specialisation cannot replace general knowledge (but rich general knowledge that should be deeply interwoven with specialised sciences, or at least with specialists), nor the convergence of multiple causes and disciplines around one problem. In my view the problem is that both general and specialised knowledge are CLOSED and go either in breadth or depth, rather than *holism* — where one ought to be able at least to *understand* and respect the views and conclusions of another profession, not to hold everything in a mystic key. Digital technology is a salvation for general knowledge — but only if used in a way that is not narrowly specialist. There is a shortage of professional interdisciplinarians, and each science and its sub-divisions remains bound to those below and above it. How is one to imagine law and the question of intention without criminology, psychology, philosophy, politics, or sociology? Everything is taught at the faculty, but disconnected even from law, let alone from the living problems and the apparently living organism of bureaucracy and society.

Durkheim regards and names all this through integration and regulation. Research conducted in the context of major recessions empirically confirms it: increased unemployment from 3 to 6 per cent statistically correlates with a rise in the suicide rate of about **6 per cent** (*Molecular Psychiatry*, 2020, online summary). **Robert Merton** in the mid-twentieth century deepened that logic with the concept of anomie as the structural tension between goals and the means to attain them. In 1996, in re-issue, it was again pointed out how such a state of anomie — a concept we recall from our education — leads not only to frustration and economic crises but to a *loss of the will for existence* as such. What contemporary theory adds to that tradition is a precise analysis of the mechanisms by which *capitalism* in its current phase privatises exactly that structural suffering — whilst communism, as we know, had its own crises tied to industry, human rights, and so on.

Mark Fisher — who himself died of depression in 2017 — describes that mechanism with the term capitalist realism: a system that has lost the capacity to imagine an alternative to itself, and simultaneously persuades anyone who suffers from anxiety or depression that the cause of the problem is in their *brain or family history*, and not in the conditions in which they work and live. Fisher calls depression "the most widespread disorder", where anger can (no longer) be "politically intensified", because every crisis is individualised and made private. I, however, go precisely toward that individualisation rather than toward politics — but where I do NOT allow the system and the norm to impose that individualisation on me (except in certain healthy or unavoidably repressive contexts), but where, as a free person, I choose an individual approach to the solution. That is not flight into oneself or out of this world. That is only recognised reality of mankind. Even if I had the ideal position at work I would not be happy — neither because of others nor because of the logic of the system and of us as individuals. I would know that this is buying time and an egoistic squandering of life for one's own and others' interests, which is either the anaesthesia of one's own nature or a utopia that does not exist, or — corrupts one's nature, because a human being is not made for work without

meaning but with meaning. There are, of course, those who love what they do, regardless of earnings. This is what Fisher called *capitalist realism* and the *privatisation of stress*.

Zygmunt Bauman approaches the problem from the angle of what he calls liquid modernity: an era in which identity, work, and relations have become fluid, temporary, and insecure. There is no longer a *safety net* or *collective structures* of support. I see this myself: in spite of the work of hospitals, a "personal and good" doctor or appointment is a "luxury". "Individualisation," writes Bauman, "consists of transforming identity from something given into a task." Every market society produces those it does not need, whom it cannot "recycle", and who experience existence in it as irreparable failure and as their own guilt rather than the society's. That is the other extreme — that the system is merciless, however and by whomever it was created or "chosen". **Franco "Bifo" Berardi** goes a step further and describes a specifically pathological form of exploitation by which digital capitalism has taken hold of what he calls the *cognitariat* — workers whose object of labour is precisely the *soul*: language, creativity, emotion, attention. Industrial capitalism enslaved the body for eight hours a day, leaving the spirit free; now it is the reverse, or both. The digital economy has no such boundary. When the flow of information and work demands accelerates so much that the "social brain" can no longer process its complexity, panic ensues that culminates in depressive collapse. Antidepressants are not a marginal phenomenon but a systemic response to that collapse — these have become impossible conditions, but I would add that this is only a new external/internal enemy where we need not know nor can do everything, yet we can still live on a crust of bread and work and write as I do now. About that alienation and the autonomy of the soul of labour Berardi wrote already in 2009. He describes suicide — particularly in the Japanese context of work culture, or in the wave of suicides of European and American workers without prospects — *as a radical break with the logic of the system* which demands of the human being *infinite adaptation and productivity* and in return offers — **insecurity**.

AI too, with all the benefits of urgent and cheaper solutions, offers help to the unemployed — and the loss of work to the employed. The paradox.

Pierre Bourdieu captures excellently what I feel about so-called symbolic violence: institutions — schools, courts, hospitals, social services — do not oppress through physical pressure but through those *bureaucratic labyrinths* that exhaust, humiliate, and remove the capacity for action precisely from those already on the margin. Yet again, the system cannot work only with those people. I asked the head teachers and the female professors: but you and your system (let us call it ours) teach us Kafka — why? So that I should live him today? Is this preparation or banality, or anaesthesia of the young? How can that same system acknowledge itself or present this as a distant world, while on the other hand the arms of that octopus hold us tight? Perhaps the system wishes to help us to swim out within it and be productive? Then either it is also confused, or it does this with intention — to make us capable of survival so as to — be useful to the system and ostensibly to individuals. Or it shows that it is in fact — undefeatable. These are strictly my words. **Hannah Arendt** would add that this violence is not the fruit of evil intentions but of banality.⁴⁰ We all know that this is not a new thesis, but it concerns not only wars. The philosophical-theological part will be at the end, and it interests me most of all.

The system spoils people, and people — by conformism, silence, disorder — sustain sick structures; there are no more secrets here. From that perspective, every exclusively clinical analysis of suicidality, however valuable, captures only the symptom, not the cause. And however much I have proceeded in this book from my own experience, what that insight confirms to me is precisely this: suffering was not only mine. It was systemic and others'. The only question is to whom it is in the interest for it to remain only mine — but that interest does not concern me, because my choice, my work, my love, and my tolerance the system cannot defeat. Perhaps it even needs me. For the system is not "only" a cold being but is smeared with all greases, even with blood — and with the warm blood of people who burn out inside it for good ideals. Who in fact work "too much" and harm themselves because they cannot say — stop. But they are exemplary, and in the end mass flight or unemployment is also an injustice towards them and those who need help. We cannot mend the system from without, but we can from within. If nothing else, even this way. By that we shall relieve the system, but, unfortunately, perhaps also the "pharmaceutical industry" or any other narcotic one. Yet these can no longer fall by themselves, and sometimes they even save.

THE PROBLEM OF BUREAUCRACY AND THE RELATION

STATE — US

At a routine appointment at KBC Rebro with my dear and distinguished doctor and professor of acute psychotic and other states, I also had certain outbursts about sexual and amorous needs after the divorce. She said after some time: "I think you will have to go into hospitalisation again — you are ripe for it." Then I went completely calm. There was a silence, because I did not want it and did not regard it as necessary. But it is extraordinary how that therapy of "the rod from paradise" had in fact a good effect. I asked quietly: "But surely you do not wish to destroy me. What would either of us gain from that?" She said... that she did not, but she stood over the keyboard and the telephone and looked for a while. She did not write it after all. I saw the limit. I had been verbally loud in defending what is best for me, not physically, because that would have been the end of the story.

After that, years of an excellent course of joint cooperation followed — respect, progress, remission, improvement, and minimal interventions, findings, diagnoses, and medication. I had no need either, because I had results, married, and so on. But it stayed in my head: limits in everything, from the over-positive and over-intimate to the too distant or conflictual, must exist! Within them we have greater freedom than with someone over a coffee. She is not only one of the most successful scientists, but I marvel that there is no greater queue. One always waits with her for a long time because she listens to people for a long time. Though I want to be briefer, I have a sense for others, because I know they too are waiting for me. And they are not at all nervous. In the psychological wards there is less nervousness. So the system is not *a priori* bad. Whether she is an exception I do not know. But when I was released from the holding-cell or from the first hospital, I gained an internal impetus not to return or not to do something — precisely so as not to betray their trust and the system! Because I shape the system and not only the system me. In that case the

system would have apparently failed, would have become ever stricter towards other patients, and would not have distinguished trust and real threat. I would have affected the domino or butterfly effect. Some such victory of mine and disassembling of the system, even through self-destruction, would have been contrary to what I want from the system — order and empathy.

Concerning cognitive-behavioural therapy, I did not agree with the doctor, the method, the "threat" that I had to pass an initiation as to whether they would even accept me, or the fact that even after the Pandemic this is done only via the internet. I even hung up the receiver and said that they were increasing my anxiety and that I could not believe how it was easier for me with my professor of psychiatry. I did not wish to humiliate him, but I asked: "Who gave you a licence for psychiatry?" After twenty minutes he called to apologise. I returned the favour and accepted, because I too was morally obliged. But he again used that "morally better" position and continued in his accelerated and bureaucratic style. I accepted, but I scarcely had the energy to bear it, until we agreed that this was not the time to "play the hero and open wounds after watching my immobile father and myself on the floor (whilst the emergency service demanded answers to 20 bureaucratic questions and finally did not come because I cut the call)". Rather, I should heal and confront things along the way — alone. That was the most honest agreement after all, although I posed the question whether they were under any obligation to accept and treat me or not. The law is always some last power or bluff, since even it changes. It turned out the opposite of forced treatment: they did not want me and did not wish to extend their comfort zone to an unpredictable variable. With my professor I went once a week, then ever more rarely; for therapy one cannot get an appointment for months and people are turned away. I again knew that no one would be on "my side" and I gave up the right. After all, I myself believe first in self-help.

When I called emergency services for my father, I was in shock. The operator was as nervous as I, and posed twenty questions about the

building, the floor, the details of access, while help was needed — *urgently*. Emergency help is not urgent but is fairly quick. At the seaside they told me to come in by car myself, while my hand had gone numb from a cat scratch. They said that during the Pandemic they had no additional vehicle. In this case from Zagreb I hung up, and they sent no one out of spite or pure procedure, although she had the basic data. I said unfortunately: "I wish only that you may live through the same with your own father." Henceforth I understood that I had to be patient, but I did not expect that even here it would stick as with stubborn or misinformed call-centre operators. Not only do many work differently, but no general rule is known.

After my grandmother's death and the shock, bureaucracy reached its peak. Perhaps I am the one who "underestimates" them and "humbles" myself before those higher. Bureaucrats probably do not have it easy either, knowing that their work is not "too important" — so they must elevate it. It was a holiday, which gave me time to draw out the penultimate pension. After that they handed me innumerable papers and directed me to pathology, where the autopsy still went on for several days. I said simply that I had no strength and no interest in dealing with this after a death, and after I had fulfilled my legal and moral duty — in life. I refused and directed them to the legal and social procedure with the eventual possibility of transfer and exhumation and later costs.

However dramatically the life ended — though not so terribly and painfully — so much is the question of the bones mere theatre and expense that makes people, even after another's and one's own death, have to fight to make the bureaucratic system function. And it does not function — because for the tomb at the seaside we do not even have the exact number. It is 500 km away, which is our own problem too, and with funeral firms there is coldness, expense, and dominance in conversation with the transfer of responsibility to us, the heirs, who are themselves ill or old. That was something I simply had to stop and breathe. The OIB had not been entered even in the death register twice the deadline, so one cannot even prove one is dead. Things move slowly too because many are dying. The

crematorium operates like the largest factory, but this is not seen. Mirogoj is so beautiful and so eerie – *devided* being and system, life cycle and business. Everyone was fleeing from death, and I only confronted it. I was ironic when I said that I missed the mass graves where they used to throw us with little procedure. And that it was easier for my father, healthy, in the war than ill, in peace, in his own state. But no one was at fault. It is simply a question of the hot potato, of corruption in registers, and of everything.

We even gave up the valuable family house at the seaside about which I write, and the car, and the tomb. But the state does not allow even this without consent. It leaves us the cost after the fire, the tax reforms, and the fall in tourism — for which we may even be ourselves to blame — and on our shoulders is much more than the state's reconstruction subsidies, and we must pay higher utility bills than in Zagreb. We have a small pension and social benefits, regardless of whether we could have done better. So I admire even the officials who bear up working. But tourism today is also a number and a fear. Neighbourly relations are tenser than ever, and the fire was probably set. Earlier it was romantic tourism, regular guests and pleasant association in autumn. From this my paternal grandmother saved, caring for guests and the apartment, so that I should have something after her death and during my schooling. And that is very little and hard, not as people think. Yet relocations and dying-out are normal. We have only forgotten this. I shall always remember the company, the people who died and whom no one now even mentions, tears of joy and sorrow when I remember all the animals and friends and adventures and longings, the first kisses, the great hopes of life and the carving of the names of all my crushes on the wall, and the last romantic experience with Jana. She was married, as I am married. My wife did not hold it against me, because I had not taken "anything" from her but half an hour. Marriage and the law are not broken until that is "reported". But, since Irma and I had in any case begun "without obligation and without hope" our friendship and marriage, she left me the freedom to feel what I had not for a long time, and what Jana too had not: adventure and romance and something new in the morning twilight.

My wife was even a consolation to me whilst I still openly mourned my former wife. I saw extraordinary stability in her, although she has the opposite diagnosis — only because she had been "lonely" in the world as I had. I thought she would also look very old (because photographs deceive in reverse), but she came for coffee the very next morning by arrangement. Something I had almost never succeeded in arranging through the internet and advertisements. With her, all things, literally all, unfolded quickly, simply, mutually, subconsciously, and openly — but only after the eightieth attempt to find someone! She maintains that the problem is in the world, not in us. I agree only partly, but it is a radical and even healthy stance. With Jana there was not much action. It was mostly hand-holding and kissing. How could I not forgive that need, both to her and to myself? I do not know how the husband would feel. But she says she has worked in the office and the family for 20 years. I too had not for years got even to a kiss. And now amidst so many cares someone looks at me "with *that* look". Is that greed or a minimum? In the end I had a drink with both her and my wife, and said it is all life. But unlike my father I did not wish for longer and more. There was the end. Those five minutes of glory, not five hundred. Later you lose. What you have, you have not. The most important is to *be* and to remain — *what you are* — not what you have or have not. And what am I? A little romantic and contemplative. As Chesterton says — *romance is an inseparable part of reality*. I am faithful and monogamous, but how could I not say to every former crush or to my own life that I loved each in her own time, however much this breaks the ideal vision? It is impossible to love only one person "for one's whole life" in a linear sense. But today, yes, I am only with my wife and love her now the most, and we have peace. But I do not deny my past. Or even hers, when she had her own engagement or worked in a massage salon. Virginity and non-virginity is today the most complicated cliché. But her soul is pure, and mine is not so corrupted. Because I dare to be what I am. I am not hypocritical, and not monogamous only out of lack of power. I know what I want and I do not want, like my father, bigamy — because I am aware that this is unrealistic rather than immoral. That in fact we are not equal to it, and that one cannot love two

women equally at the same time. Differently — perhaps; but therein is the problem.

I want the wife I have, who has precedence over my former wife whom I awaited so long, because this one now came and remained as a gift from God. That trust I will not throw away. Otherwise I would love my former forever. And subconsciously I still do. *De facto* I have two wives, although one cannot force anyone to love. But my former wife herself said and showed by deeds that I remained in her subconscious. That I enjoy intimate contact, which is so rare, and some changes in life, yes. But I do not run around like a predator. For I take more pleasure in higher things, such as writing this book.

Several years after the arrest I contacted the police counsellor and said how I had "succeeded" and how I would remember her trust to the end of my life — because she had released me under the threat that I should stop with the messages, or that I would be "finished" if I did "anything". My father and mother cooperated with her and copied messages so that I could be drawn out. I wrote to her that I had remarried and that I was grateful, because the invisible part is not seen — when the threat is not realised, not desired, and when empathy or intelligence within the police apparatus yields prevention and a better life, not just the black chronicle. Freedom is always risk. It was strange when she told me that I had no ban on leaving the city. And I was just going back to the seaside — which means, *further* from my former wife. That is the problem of the system's double logic. The system is both people and a calculation. But I had not expected so much bureaucracy then.

To go for the death certificates I have never experienced more callousness, unkindness, and formal obstacles. It was easier for me to leave the holding-cell. It is the procedure after death which is harder than that before death and than death itself; mourning has not even passed. And all for the sake of a formal paper. Older people increasingly cannot follow the nervousness and digitalisation, which only piles up and is an end in itself. When I went from one official to another, the professional deformation was

no different at all, and my prediction that I would not go, or that I would give up many things and return the "hot potato" back to the state, turned out to be correct. After all, the state cannot force us to do something — only that we should bear the consequences. Then there returned to me that feeling which I did not want to let flare up and accumulate:

- As **Erich Fromm** wrote in *The Sane Society*, we treat ourselves for illnesses we ourselves create. When they asked me in hospital whether I felt unwilling to live, I answered that I felt willing! Just not with the problems and bureaucracies I have and that I no longer want, after so much schooling, varied voluntary work, patience, waiting, and even worse physical health. Many, unfortunately, including the war veterans or their children — like me, in the golden interstice of generations — have no strength for two wars. Or are persuaded they have no strength. That is what I said in the corridor. But the officials did not understand it that way; they kept their division of us-and-you (state-citizen), or said that they too are human, the spouses of veterans, and so on. What then is the problem? I realised I must "serve" the state even when I am losing my rights. I am the one who could give up life because I have "too much property" rather than too little — the opposite, perhaps, of what occurs in stock-market crashes. Because I have no children, and on me lies all the burden. So I did not laugh at my father when he said that my half-sister is in fact a relief for me and not a competition.

- Do we have the right to choose life regardless of pain or happiness? It is scientifically proven that one stress damages immunity more than two joyful moments help it. I do not plan actively to work against myself or society. And fortunately, I want in fact to be the one over whose back the last thing will break. Why? As the youngest in the family, I do not want all property to go on lifetime maintenance, debts, brief medical treatments, but I shall then passively endure the (un)dignified end of life — not wishing to burden the system, nor to put in question the purity of the inheritance I wish to leave to my half-sister and to my former wife's child. As my grandmother said on the floor: "Leave me, I do not want the bed. Turn off

the light and just leave me in peace." — I realised this is not so unnatural, undignified, and hard a dying. Dignity is gained today. The easier life is for us, the easier it is to preserve it, but it is fragile. The process of death, fortunately and unfortunately, is even longer and shows strength — but there is no sense complicating what is natural.

▪ I have unexpected, both wonderful and awkward, experiences with the Employment Bureau or schools, and try to reconcile and embrace the interest of myself and society, swimming between sickness and health, where every extreme is not only useless and dangerous for everyone but also unrealistic. As it was said in my film: We are all both healthy and sick! We all only want not to be hurt again. The question is how to adapt and use a new chance. Though I know that the state too sometimes helps much — but only ex officio.

FURTHER ON BUREAUCRACY

I shall add a little more on the problem of bureaucracy of which I often speak in this book as one of the "causes" of suicide or alienation (from school onwards):

- **HANNAH ARENDT and the banality of evil.** Although the banality of evil is regarded through the way "ordinary people through administration and habit become evil", the problem in fact is in another banality. Bureaucrats are executors of some evil or imperfection of the system. And, of course, of good and development. But the problem often is — and this is the psychological one I have seen — that they have more passion and faith that their work is most important in an ontological sense, so that they often offend holistic intelligence and human integrity or dignity. Therefore clear evil is sometimes easier to bear than banal evil. It wears one out because one does not expect it.
- Take as an example *Himmler* and those like him as they came to the camp. With them the sincerity of intention is almost clear. My

Copernican reversal: the dignity they offered is greater than that offered by the camp clerks or sadists. Why? To dehumanise some group, or to dehumanise me as a citizen, he had first to grant me the status of: *a) human being, b) enemy, c) competitor, d) someone worth investing resources and energy in* through the apparatus of bureaucracy and objectification. First he had to acknowledge — dignity, humanity, subject — to then dehumanise, objectify, and strip dignity. Precisely because he considers that for people "like us" neither discipline, intimidation, nor torture is of use, but annihilation. He keeps enemies in fact as people with a stance, and traitors or sycophants no one even values. Strangely, the meeting with someone like him is, paradoxically, a *human meeting*. From a criminal you do not expect worse than the crime itself, and you often see in them the remnants of humanity. With bureaucracy you expect humanity and simplicity, and you live through the ant who pretends to be a giant only because he has a delegated position of power. To them you are a *thing without purpose — and to a Nazi you are a purpose that must become a thing*. That is my opinion. With them every minute or shred of humanity is a gift or a miracle (as with the Höss biography which I researched), whilst with the bureaucracy it is always the relation man — wall (a wall in the shape of a man, who may in essence be only a working man, but habituated to dullness without the least critical thought). With the bureaucrat the attempt to humiliate or to elevate to a higher level does not help, nor does their lowering or humiliating of us. If I succeed, then it is a moral fall of ourselves and of those weaker or more or less resilient. I did not encounter a different relation even on the "police hour" in staffrooms and offices as a teacher. The modern life kills the human being where we are least prepared, opposite to schooling. It humiliates us through meaninglessness and the eternal struggle with windmills. There is no "adrenaline of broader truth". Form so leads over spirit that it wants to embrace it. The banality of stupidity thinks itself stronger even than the

aesthetic of evil, which has always been mystical. *The bureaucrat — annuls me; the criminal — destroys me*. That is a great difference! We lawyers would say — the bureaucracy makes you *ex tunc* as though you had never been; whilst a certain politics creates or destroys you *ex nunc*, from the moment it sets out to act, without taking your past but only labelling it with content.

- Dark tourism such as visits to the camps does not draw people through hollow absurdity, but through the illusion of normality in its extreme. As Fromm roughly says, many radical reactions are only the prolonged reactions of ordinary emotions and inclinations of people. The "mechanisation of spirit" makes bureaucracy a purpose in itself. My existential aversion to this is not from spite, madness, dissatisfaction, but from the buried "soul" of the system. The enemy acknowledges your existence, and the bureaucracy does not wish to recognise even your death so easily. That is the ontological humiliation of "absolute spirit". But it must not descend to that except temporarily. Because absolute spirit is precisely what destroys lower truths and lower spirit. Though apparently less influential, the war against the worst and most efficient ideologies was won not only by force and will but by *natural law*. If you become worse than the bureaucracy, the bureaucracy does not eat you. The higher power eats you — where you become the one who is spoiling the order. Our frustration is that we think our punishment is always greater than theirs. But if we do not cross the line, we let the system collapse or develop by itself, and we remain in fact longer and safer in our survival. A clear example of two different systemic evils is the meeting of the physical criminal Jelisić and President Slobodan Milošević,⁴¹ where the former terrorised the

⁴¹Michel **Foucault**, *Discipline and Punish* (Gallimard, 1975); *Madness and Civilisation* (Plon, 1961); and the 1976–79 lecture courses at the Collège de France in which the concepts of *biopower* and *governmentality* are developed. Goran Jelisić ("the Serbian Adolf"), Bosnian Serb camp commander at Luka (Brčko), sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment by the ICTY at the Hague in 1999 — the cited episode of his confrontation with Slobodan Milošević in the UN Detention Unit appears in court reporting and journalistic accounts. The reference to

latter in the detention unit, because the latter had never become accustomed to the street "argot", and had paradoxically himself created it.

- CONCLUSION ON DIGNITY: dignity is one of the reasons for collapse, even for suicide, because of the "situation in the state". It would appear that we are only instruments and consequences of bad organisation, but I think even this is too simple. Rather, in my view, in a radically evil or rotten system — *better are those whose higher goal is evil than those whose lower goal is "good"*. When the doctors gave my father unmarked tablets — a heap of them — they said they had a good intention. But I asked them why people say that the path to hell is paved with good intentions. Who will prove who is at fault if something has "gone astray", or if they took the wrong one? And what we took at all? If one does the work, one should do it precisely. If not, better to leave it. Better to be a bad wolf than a good sheep that follows another in jumping into the abyss. I often asked the officials, granting that they are not "to blame": "Do you not see that people are not satisfied with the state, and that we are ever fewer in it?" But they do not regard themselves as the state at all, nor of course as those who create the laws. That tension is what is real — but even good: *dialectical existentialism versus dichotomy*. Many, however, fall into *apathetic and pessimistic existentialism* through utopian intentions. Even pessimism is not bad; one finds it everywhere — but the depressive kind that creates the feeling of powerlessness and the need for a justice which we ourselves do not exercise but feel and do not want to spoil, but spoil additionally.
- MY GOAL is — to protect myself and to protect the system. But that is not the whole truth. That is only a recipe for survival and analysis

Victor **Hugo** concerns his thesis that society produces its own monsters. The author's citation of Anne Case and Angus Deaton refers to *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism* (Princeton UP, 2020), where suicide is analysed as part of the wider collapse of the lower middle class. Matthew Lieberman, *Social* (Crown, 2013), on "social pain" as activating the same neural circuitry as physical pain. Mihály Csikszentmihályi on inner harmony and flow.

and a kind of purity. For no one thinks of themselves that they are on a bad road. Practitioners or politicians will not be interested, nor top scientists, because it is too simple — but that is the only possible drop in the ocean that fulfils me. To the architects of evil and false partial philosophies — like *Chamberlain* with Hitler and like-minded — I would ask: "Do you not see that this is mainly a lie, your and our ruin?" Then the question would be whether they want truth or whether, like Goebbels, they want truth to be the instrument of their power and self-deception, however consistent. The thing is that the legitimacy of *Mein Kampf* would have been greater had it not later been realised through tyrannical successes and failures, and through the verdict of history with the attempt at effective and violent implementation of monolithic thought. But their logic is: "Relativity moves nothing." I think it does. Even Einstein thinks so. On partial truths a fellow theologian, who was recovering from a suicide attempt, said that a heap of denominations in Christianity arose from clutching at one (relatively unimportant) verse after another. As did a heap of philosophical schools. Perhaps after the "madness" of the Cross and of Christ (or of the perfect anti-logic) came — the end of philosophy, as Fukuyama and Bell's end of ideology and history should have come. It came and it did not, regardless of the economy.

- Is it more important to a person *to be in the right or in control*? One scarcely goes without the other. He truly wins who endures and proves that he is right. But that is in fact linked. You have control through truth and self-control. Slower but harder. Harder, but cheaper, not more expensive. In fact, you are freest in this system. There I am similar to my grandfather, who was conservative precisely because he feared changes and adjustments in sudden revolutions. I even like it when authorities have a different "scale". The worst, of course, is no authority at all, or wholly corrupt authority. But bureaucracy and the system one does not change from the position of the weaker. So that is a futile attempt, and

unfortunately the ruin of many who think they can pressurise the system and its tolerance on the other side through fatal revolt. Even the strongest states are small in the system. Because then people lose every deep respect and fall into oblivion even from the citizens. In that is the essence of suicide and not in the physical act. From the other side — *lower truth with force will never be stronger than higher truth without force*, is my thought. The metaphysics of power is perhaps simply a self-generating force of truth — and there we come to the Hegelian, although even he cannot do without the presupposition of the authority of the state and the general intention. The force of truth is neither from above nor from below, but free-floating above all. Though again, perhaps neither Mannheim-like nor Machiavelli-like. Many generals therefore knew the truth, and politicians only wanted it. The world is not changed by great dissidents, nor by bureaucracy, nor by small free thinkers. Nor by my father, who is ambivalent — on one side pedagogically respected, on the other traumatised, "latently aggressive and dissatisfied (especially before retirement when he was still healthy)" — like the cats he loves, because the world will not adjust to his vision. As the female philosophy professor was treated "by laughter", because she was neither in the highest rank nor the lowest, but in the one where she was alone. The professors said she thought she was above them, when in fact she was lonely beside them. My father's also clinically dissociative disorder and incapacity for his own pedagogy, despite strong will and training, show exactly the two sides of the coin of even the most successful people of the system. And works such as mine perhaps show the other side of the least successful members of the system and of individuals. We do not change, but we contribute to change. Even those who fall contribute to change, but far more, and through unnecessary damage. For many call the invisible mere fools. But the pen is mightier than the sword — for survival of the spirit, and sometimes of the body. Not because of victory, reviews, popularity, money or

reputation. It is hard to be in 30% of something, surrounded by 60% of people who do not think so. But it is precisely they who push you to rise into 25%. Just as those at the top, often inaccessible (but therefore the more worth remembering or reading), encourage you similarly. The least are you encouraged by your equals. But with equals and lesser it is easier and more often possible to live.

- Why was *Max Weber* so obsessed with bureaucracy? Because of the "disenchantment" of the world from unpredictability, magic, ideas. But his mixture of technical wonder was also an expression of deep existential horror. He feared the "iron cage", into which only now, having entered, I see it was not only a dead letter on paper. The cage kills charisma and creates great noise — even to the point that the small person reaches the half-hidden intention of the legislator. Efficiency is before substance, and instructive norms are often infinite and ambiguous. But efficiency is the only possible and perfect mode in today's world, and has a double effect. Unfortunately it has, paradoxically, a doubly parasitic effect. For example, the simple bankruptcy procedure releases obligations and forgives persons so they may continue to function — but they can in this way "cheat" creditors and unsecured credit-givers. And those unsecured credit-givers collect expensive interest and insurance and reckon that they will "milk" someone and "give to" another. That is mutual benefit in injustice. The circle is vicious, and some "cover" always exists. But thanks be to them — for they created not only the need for therapy but the therapy and self-therapy that strives from the particular to the general conclusion.
- EXCEPTIONS in bureaucracy and over-humanity again form another "unnatural" extreme, which is likewise not "natural" by the "German principle", because it leads into chaos — but is strong. The lady who saw, for example, that we had no money for a parking fine because the help or the pension had not yet arrived, but we had honestly written that they should send us a new payment slip when we would then pay the whole sum, cancelled it (by discretion or not)

and chose a humanly invisible empathic approach. And restored both trust and distrust or opacity into the system, since the fine has not yet disappeared in prescription and may come back.

- Confrontation and acceptance are always easier — as on the exam from which I wanted to flee, and in which I would have erred a great deal. But it requires the more will and breaking of inertia in the other direction.

CASES OF EXTREMITY IN THE STRUGGLE WITH THE SYSTEM

Known cases — from Split or the Hague, etc. — concerning murders or suicides directed against the "callous system" are always judged through a relative ratio against the absolute "categorical imperative". If the system is not in order — this does not mean we may be such ourselves. If we support resistance against the system we make it at once more productive and weaker. If we want destruction of the system we destroy ourselves. Whether something is a heroic act is always seen through the perspective of courage versus weakness and reactive dominance. That is violent acquisition of truth and power through the unexpected. That is in the end "bitterness of the weak" or a kind of *ressentiment* as Nietzsche would say. And in war too it is questionable whether transition of the system brings more good or harm than assimilation to it. Not only does the revolution eat its children and create voids — it creates a nearly identical system. The system cannot vanish; it can only be changed. What can vanish is human life, trust, and everything which can in appearance be quickly repaired.

"KAFKAISM"

What is an understandable frustration is that we feel almost all of us sometimes psychically disjointed and dehumanised as *Josef K.* The system is absurd when it advertises the book and educates the young, since it concerns the bitter reality of complex problems and self-protection, not conspiracy — but where people both inside and outside the system suffer. Psychologically these are problems unexpected and hard, but the "set reading" actually banalises, prepares, or anaesthetises the young, so that the system through education in fact discloses itself, which is paradoxical and absurd — when otherwise its main feature is to keep silent. For the situation has not changed from Kafka's Austria-Hungary, through socialism, to today's digital Pandemic and post-Pandemic times, where the individual and social masks have fallen. When the police told me I had to know myself who had reported me, that is not right. Because I truly did not know, and it is also a duty to know why one is warned and taken in. The system becomes like an embittered individual sometimes, and the individual like me extends a hand to the system. Though the police later helped me to switch off ovens, waited for me to pack things, talked, and so on. But all that is too much personification of what is not personal. Or when the woman at the counter says: "I am a person, not the state — a mother, also a veteran's spouse." You are not! We only pretend. You are in your capacity as a state apparatus in our relation, and you can never be a "person", as I cannot be a person but only a number in this relation. But it would be nice if that number had a human face, and the other way round. Even in prostitution a person can have the best impression of a lovely relation, while knowing that the relation does not exist — only the bill. Many prefer this to a real, worse, relation.

INSTITUTIONAL "BETRAYAL"

I have felt on my own skin, not betrayal, but that effect — moral injury and loss of meaning in the eternal wheel of society. Not to mention *administrative violence* and *learned helplessness* even when we do not want it. Nervousness, loss of identity and humanity, *accumulated stress* and PTSD, secondary victimisation, the feeling of infinite struggles with all generations. The statistics speak of it too. *Transgenerational trauma* instead of enjoyment of the "afternoon of life" and the knowledge or experience we have acquired. Systemic insensitivity which is not deliberate and perfidious — but is therefore still worse. Burden is inherited; rights ever less. The most rational and still the hardest way is the following:

- ▶ Expressing one's position without crossing legal limits.
- ▶ Refusal of swallowing emotions, but also of long chewing-over of thoughts; growth and resilience as the lesser evil and in fact the fruit of economical laziness.
- ▶ Kindness and patience wherever possible, and refusal to globalise.
- ▶ Recognising injustice but knowing subtle and long-term causes rather than singular ones; recognising the human being in the official of the system who perhaps does not leave such an impression, who is perhaps not grateful even for a gift or empathy (which they perhaps do not even need, because they are accustomed to be helpless and less "human").
- ▶ Turning to the positive goal and outcome of the day and year, but gradually. That is sufficient effort in itself. *Escapism* without addiction, but accepting the passingness of pain and its eternity that is not, and need not be, absolute. Understanding that after pain we forget that pain even was, or that a new wound heals an old one and sweetly recalls the survived past.
- ▶ Why is the number of suicides always similar (about 600 a year)? The same question. The matter concerns a different concatenation of factors, not agreement. An invisible quota and the *social rate* with regular cracking at the seam still remain strange to me.

THE POLICE AS MY CORRECTIVE BUT ALSO MY REFUGE

I do not know whether the police inspector at Trešnjevka received my chocolate and letter, but it was delivered. I did the same with the doctors and the professors. I sent something to her colleague, the man and the woman who took me on, as well — small gestures of gratitude, not bribes. When I was at my worst, those people were correctives. They did not arrest me; they did not humiliate me. They listened, they understood, they acted within the law but with humanity.

It may sound strange to say that the police were a refuge for me. But there were moments — in conflict with the system, in fear, in despair — when an ordinary uniformed officer treated me with more dignity than some doctors or bureaucrats. The police, when they function as they should, are an embodiment of the law as protection, not as oppression. That is rare, and that is why I write about it. They became my corrective, in the sense that they returned me to reality when I was in distress; and a refuge, in the sense that they showed me that the state, through some of its agents, can be a friend and not only an enemy.

I am aware that the police are not always like this — in other times, in other places, in other regimes, they have been the opposite. But my personal experience was overwhelmingly positive, and I owe it to record it. We complain often, justly, about the system; but we must also note when the system works, and through whom. This chapter is my small thanks to those who, in uniforms, were more human than many in white coats.

I add here what, in my edits, I had inadvertently removed — and what is too important to leave out, both as autobiography and as observation of the system from within. The three brief encounters I had with the police shaped a view of them that the public is rarely told. I record this not as polemic against the press, which reports almost only the failures, but as a counterweight: an account from someone who was on the other side of the desk, in handcuffs, and who came out of it with *respect rather than resentment*.

In the stations, officers asked me how I was. They offered coffee. They gave me **trust** — which I did not want to lose, not for their sake but for my own, because once another human being extends that gesture, the moral law within me (to borrow *Kant*) demanded that I return it intact. For years afterwards I sent chocolates and letters of thanks. I do not say this for credit; I say it because such reciprocity does not appear in the newspapers, and so the silent half of the relationship is allowed to stay invisible.

On the journey by car to the Zagreb station, both my wife at the time and the inspector asked whether the music in the car was disturbing me. I was permitted to choose. The female officer who escorted me did not call the charges grave — she said they were *not so terrible*, although I myself, when I read what I was alleged to have said to my wife, found my own words *appalling*. That was the strange thing: that women, in that particular situation, took my side in an accusation *about* a woman. Not because they were now siding with men against women — but because of a kind of **maternal role** that opens up in vulnerable moments, even towards the more arrogant offender. I do not mean to romanticise this; nor is it a fetish; it is simply one of the forms of human beauty I was given to see in those officers, women officers, and the public defender — that they were *human beings inside a system*, and the paradox of the moment was that the same system was *comforting me from my own former wife*, to whom I had become a perceived threat.

In the cell next to mine, a man shouted and threatened the officers without having been arrested for any such thing in the first place; *I, who was so quiet they forgot to escort me to the interrogation*, was the one charged with menace. They had to err on the side of caution — and humanly, they saw the difference. That itself is a small grace. One sees there how the system is *caught between human perception and bureaucratic capacity* — between politics, prevention, and the procedures it must keep in place no matter what.

The female inspector who handled my case in Zagreb — who, by a strange coincidence, also bore the surname *Marušić*, although unrelated —

was herself divorced from another Marušić. A coincidence that startled us both, and that on a more suspicious mind might have read as bias *against* me (a divorced Marušić ranged against another Marušić, the new accused). She was not vindictive. *We are not all the same — that is the point.* She gave me her **trust**, and worked alongside my father to gather the evidence that helped me out. She warned me: if I were to fail again, I would be *finished*. I did not want to fail anyway. She also told me, in passing, that she loved the film *The Notebook* — I had cited that film as something my former wife and I had once shared, before the late and possibly prompted complaint — and, in the same breath, that I was not to whimper for my former wife or contact her further. The contrast between the warmth of that exchange and the gravity of the moment is something I cannot adequately set down: it was **empathy as a living miracle**, wholly real and wholly unexpected.

I was given, paradoxically, no order banning me from leaving the city. This is a *bureaucratic absurdity*, since the very thing that would have removed me from any temptation to approach my former wife was to leave Zagreb — which is in fact what I did, returning to the seaside, to my house, to the cats, and to the neighbours who were startled by the whole affair but who saw that I was holding together. I did not want, however, to be only alone, or to remain in nostalgia. The empty house and the silent terrain were teachers, not idols.

A further small detail that has stayed with me: on a street altercation in which I was not the aggressor, the police drove me home in their own car *instead* of letting me take the bus, and wrote up only a misdemeanour. They also wished to speak with me *in front of the hospital* and at the admissions desk — gently, not to interrogate. At the petrol station, when they would not tell me why I was being checked, I tried to **humanise them** by asking what they were looking for; if they could see me as a person, perhaps they would speak. Their answer was that they were "just doing their job". And yet afterwards, in every subsequent encounter, they were polite — and often, I think, *themselves uncertain* as to what to do

and whom to believe. I respect them, especially the young women in that hard profession, who increasingly face attacks rather than offering them. The myths of brutality are, in my direct experience, archaic — either the stale story or a piece of flattery aimed at a different audience. And yet I admit: that politeness is also *bureaucratic*, as is much else.

When my mother once wept to receive a transaction confirmation she had been told was impossible, in the end they gave it to her — which shows the rules bend; but it also shows that her weeping was a small uncontrol they wished to silence *through* control. The empathy was different in kind. And yet justification on her part, repeated over and over, would not have worked. Officers, I have learnt, prefer honesty and silence, *up to a point*. My mother often speaks too much, even when explaining things in good faith — and that, paradoxically, makes her case harder, not easier.

One officer once said, half in jest, that he thought I was *afraid he might hit me*. He saw the inhibition in me. When I tried, instead, to explain everything in detail — to give the whole context — he found this strange but *amusing*. The empathy was perhaps also produced by the overcrowding of the cells and a certain theatre of all sides; I cannot rule that out. But the inspector who *waved at me* and asked whether I was hungry and whether I was holding together did something to me that was not theatre — he **broke me, in the good sense**. That the system which arrests me also comforts me — from my own former wife, to whom I was the threat — is a paradox I never expected to live through. They saw, of course, that I had lost my way and was not a habitual offender. But the tenderness, the calm, the safety I felt among them in those hours took me by surprise. I came out **positively broken** — and grateful that I had been given to live through such a thing rather than merely read about it. The same is true of the public defender who later helped me *free of charge*, whose generosity I have not been able to repay except by speaking it here.

Later, when promises of food were not kept — as sometimes happens within the same institution — the morning brought a small loaf-

pâté that the other detainees shared *generously*, and that gesture too belonged to the same broader picture of human decency in places that are not designed to display it. The fear, however, was real, and I felt it most keenly in the amygdala: I was *exhausted by it* more than by anything else, and I could hardly wait for the conversations with the officers, which I came to experience as *a psychic refuge* — a strange position for the accused. Perhaps it was because I, who had studied on *their* side of the law and should by rights have been their colleague, found a fragment of that lost belonging in the gentleness of those exchanges.

Some other officers — better trained for runners, more alert for the aggressive — followed every step of mine and even said openly that they would not chase me through the woods if I bolted. That had never crossed my mind. We arrived in Zagreb very quickly, the *bura* howling in the channel near Maslenica; the police were using their own petrol on me only because of protocol and official duty. I prayed in silence and observed. It was, in spite of everything, **an interesting life experience from within** — even if brief — and I am grateful to have lived it, not merely to have read about it.

A final note that ties this to the larger theme: I had to remove my shoelaces so I would not hang myself in the cell. That is a detail I had almost forgotten to write down. It is a procedure that does not change, and rightly so — *Article 5 ECHR* and the protection of life take priority. *Article 4* (self-harm in the strict sense) never crossed my mind in that moment — I was not contemplating suicide on the hard bench of the cell — but I was wearing myself thin with emotion, more afraid of the noise of drunkards in adjoining cells than of anything else, since silence had set in among the rest of us. It was a quiet *claustrophobia*. I could hardly wait for the morning. And yet I slept on that hard bench, and I dreamed all manner of foolishness, the way the body decides to rest in spite of the mind. That, too, is one of the facts the system reveals about a person — and that the person learns about himself.

It is strange to set this down. I know how easily a reader can suspect either flattery of authority or naïveté. I am neither flattering nor naive. I am recording *what I saw*, from a vantage point that is rarely written: the citizen who entered the apparatus on serious charges and found, *in the people inside it*, a humanity that the apparatus itself does not officially provide. The system as such did not save me; certain *persons within the system* did. That is the distinction I want to preserve.

THE CHURCH AS MY AND OUR REFUGE — AND ALSO A "VACUUM"/COUNTER-EFFECT

In the ecclesiastical lawsuit I made every effort to retain the legal status of the past marriage rather than nullity. Although thereby I "worked" against my wife's interest, and yet for her — which interest I later blessed, but not as a rule but as an exception, risking to leave myself "closed" to the future — I wanted to defend the truth of love and partnership as the chief values of marriage in my view. We who met in the church became an example of the destruction of marital institution and conscious vow, despite hopes. But the court estimated that my state was too heavy, as were my sins, and that I had not been in a condition to found the sacrament and community of marriage. My counter-question was: "Were my grandmother and grandfather then in a wild relation and in a *fictive marriage*, yet endured?" They did not "console" me too much, but drew questions from me, and yet I did not turn against the Catholic Church or leave it. My father as the sole counter-witness asked: "What is the purpose of the trial if the judgement is already passed?" I respect its formal provisions, but the New Testament depth and material truth, which is hard to discover and yet to satisfy everyone, is lost.

A friar who informed me that my former brother-in-law was dead asked me not to leave the church after all this. But that did not pull me at all, no more than do the eternal disputes within dogma and practice. By my deed and experience I showed that I had founded a new marriage, even better,

but not as fated, rather as a second parallel path that was foreseen. A renewed petition could not be granted, because that would too quickly go pragmatically against the prior prohibition of contracting a new marriage. And by that I should be deprived of intimate union until I attain perfection in an imperfect world — that is, until I am healed so as to return to the "sick environment" of the world. Not to mention the many bureaucratic obstacles in the church where I was baptised and where I learned that my former wife now lived and had already requested papers. The priest was angry that the box of "registry" had been ticked, although it was their authority itself that ordered new copies to start the proceedings. Plus, since I had been in various parishes in life, a heap of papers always had to be obtained and permissions secured, since to get those papers is like reaching for gold. The errors in legal procedure I always had to correct, and to draw out duplicate copies. Apparently because everything is only my "interest", and state and church would be happiest with empty institutions. They attract people and do everything to drive them away.

My former wife is in my view in permanent adultery, but has legally founded a new marriage with my relative — which I sincerely bless, and only now do I see my meaning and the meaning of all my regarding everything in the previous book as a beginning (INITIUM) and an attempt to conceive a (male) child, who has now been conceived in the family of my relative, and who is at once also my relative. Let it be, and I will leave him something as promised, though I have no contact. It was precisely after that message that I was arrested. It tormented me long whether this was chance or whether my wife thought I was threatening the future child. In fact my strength of forgiveness, adaptation, and the fact that I "saved" both old and new wife and child and relative (on my paternal grandmother's side) by having been "intermediary" — their surname too was dying out in the male line. All count on children and do not count on the end and the distribution of sexes and talents, of decisions or illnesses contrary to the expected. Whether all our parents should have done something else, does not even matter. I hold that it is better to involve or blame them as little as possible for relations between men and women, or among us their descendants.

There I saw my role and accepted that child "as my own" and knew that this was a mystery I had not foreseen, and that over my back and over my pain there would grow — flowers. But on the other side, that is also why we are born into the burdens of past and future. I would not now change this state for anything — but neither would I associate with everyone. A weeping little prayer brought me a new ideal marriage in fact, and I am formally still outside both marriages and ecclesiastical legality, and consider the opposite. Deeds and time show right, not verdicts. I did not even appeal, because that would have been selfish and pointless. Faith is both a psychological, mental, and real phenomenon, and in my view the essential is — the *meaning* of life and not the "quality of life", which is relative. After all, they are in correlation we often do not see. Faith and love are both gift and immersion, as **Kierkegaard** says. I think that nature, and the question of morality, faith, and consciousness, is still something that has existed always, regardless of the degree of biological development. So suicide is perhaps the final slavery and not freedom. Whence then so many falls among old people who were believers, scientists, and educators? And how is it that they behaved contrary to it before the end?

THE REAL "FLIGHT OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST"

At the seaside, in our village, one neighbour — known for criminal activities and participation in international military formations — according to the verdict had planned the killing of his godfather with whom he had been quarrelling, and was finally convicted. In prison he could not bear loneliness. He attempted suicide with a razor blade, caused certain incidents over a football match on the TV (as "McMurphy" in the film), and they gave him forced calming medications under which, in "suspicious circumstances" (as his lawyer says), he died of heart failure. The matter is treated as an official secret, and the truth is not known — but it is known that medications act differently on each person, just as it is known that they are not given to anyone simply out of nothing. I myself voluntarily accepted treatment, although the police said it would not be voluntary if I refused.

But simply, the prison is too hard a place for anyone in the end, and so is the hospital. I always feared it.

When I came before the police and the camera, before psychiatrists, girls, or professors, it was not I nor my theories that came. There came my "AURA". For the human brain, even with less perception, immediately recognises capacity, truth, and radiation. My logic is simple: why should I, by my radiation, provoke still worse radiation and reaction from others? It is time to profile one's own aura on the basis of authenticity.

At Jankomir some fellow patients in the social-work session complained how the doctor had offended them, by accident or by intent. They were hurt as children. Their ego was hurt, because one regards the doctor as a protector and helper, not as an enemy. I began with the opposite perception (within myself). I knew that besides the third branch of power there exist "fourth" ones too. But not because they have evil intentions. Rather because they have — *power*. Instead of emotional outbursts, manipulations, and the rest, one must take into account their position, their intention, and their limits. I hold that tolerance is great, among other things because of the system's congestion. But likewise that one must cooperate. Why? Because their goal is to resolve as quickly as possible a problem that is not the only one. That does not mean not taking one's position or not knowing one's rights and being acquainted with one's case. But competing, flattering, or anything of the sort is simply counterproductive. If you negotiate, knowing they are in a position of grace or no-grace, you are not violating the order. You are — fitting in, and then you can even lead yourself and them toward the most rational outcome. On the welcomes of athletes at secondary school I succeeded in jumping the fence and entering to the very end, and no one caught me. Why? Lest they lose their own places. That infiltration was in good intention, but shows that the system is not impenetrable yet not naïve either.

"LEARNED HELPLESSNESS — AND HELP(?)"

Of learned helplessness we have spoken often. But there is another side. People not only cannot but do not want to be at liberty, because they see that liberty is the precondition of contamination and not the reverse. Many return to the hospital or prison because they fit there better. My father tried everything to leave the hospital and come home. He dreamt only of his own toilet. And when he came home at five in the morning he sent me a message: "Here it is the worst, no one is here. I want back to the hospital! There it was good."

THE "CAMP EXPERIMENT" AS CONCLUSION AND "SYSTEMIC PROOF" OF BIOLOGY OVER MORALITY?

In the camps, especially the Nazi ones, the number of *kapos* and the number of "saints" (whom Frankl considered better than himself — because they did not come out) is similar, making just under 10% in each case. The rest is in fact the *mass* that drowned in the result. The camp is neither a therapy nor a proof solely of the inhumanity of the perpetrators, but — *the bare truth of human nature* and of those who passed through it.⁴² Where even **Primo Levi** and **Bettelheim**, alongside Frankl, depict the degree of *apathy, regression, and the grey zone of survival* among the prisoners themselves. Many hold that in "abnormal" circumstances people do not have wholly free will. But the problem is that in "normal" circumstances

they can be equally callous. Normality is simply — *radicalised*. And suicide is only: a radical cry for life, a radical defeat and resistance, or a radical illness and depression. The difference between the one who kills himself and the one who only talks is often *in courage and in the prediction of bad consequence*.

I have heard a hundred times in normal life — *that other one is no man, he is a beast*. In the small district in the village, where disputes are over roads, this is a long-term example of how petty-bourgeois (emotional) urges are embedded in the normal world. Not to mention that I have seen the same equally — among the highly educated. I was truly not raised in chauvinism. But the general impression about an "enemy nation" was always that these are non-humans or extraterrestrials. When I saw a dead soldier on television I could not believe it. They told me: "Here, this is a četnik." I thought they were joking. "How can he be a četnik, when he looks like a person?" Only he had not shaved. And besides, the man is dead, and the adults rejoice. Children often have a black-and-white vision of the world. The grey zone becomes the half-full glass we look at into old age. My first encounter with violence (even just), with pornography, with slaughter, was eerie and shameful. I could hardly walk afterwards, while in others I saw greater or much smaller disgust at the same things. And these are exemplary colleagues and citizens. Later I myself "got used" to it so as to save the integrity of the rest of my being. Often the introverts or ambiverts only ask themselves — is this the normal world? What if I do not wish to act by these rules, even if they at the same time feed and destroy society? While a person eats "broiler" chicken they will never know the taste of the home-raised. Yet, despite the priority of biology, Frankl criticised the simplification of Freud, who from his armchair concluded that people would lose all features and characteristics when left to bare survival. In his book he mentioned that 2,500 prisoners fasted to hide who had stolen bread, and accepted collective punishment. But that is again only a variation, or an intermediate space.

MY GIVINGS-UP AND MY "GPL" (BPD) AS A DIAGNOSIS OF THE SYSTEM

My givings-up (of some job and advancement, of a doctorate, or even the "attempt at renouncing the degree"), as well as my disappointments at long waits for reviews, varying criteria, and grades depending on the knowledge and interest of the markers themselves, of me, of the journals or the faculties, and my methodology which I tailored in various strange ways. For exemptions from exams they made no problems, but for exemptions from study they looked only at the negative side of works that had already been positively published. That is the power of bureaucracy. Not to mention that they did not accept hypotheses of work that would be too politically or legally provocative. Or they refused citations of certain experts because of their personal behaviour. But this concerns also the unknown life of a practical and theoretical "interdisciplinary" character such as I, who is simply perhaps not the sign of *Borderline Personality Disorder* as the church court's expert determined, looking — apparently — at the overall picture when he concluded that I meet the criteria by all of the American (?) classification's. Although he regarded this as my cold, unwilling diagnosis, he marvelled why, when I again sought permission for a second marriage, I did not come "out of unease" and why I regarded this as something subjective. Because it *is* subjective and offensive. Like every one-sided, good or bad, qualitative or unqualitative analysis and conclusion about someone or something — they can affect people. Because the possibility was not left open that this is perhaps — my individual characteristic and liberation, diversity and dissatisfaction with the established forms of responsibility in work, creativity, or family.

Instead of praise of freedom in choice, where I have day and night tried a few more trades, refurbished a house, had good and bad ideas but also gained experience, beautiful and natural experiences to the full, and even some money that comes and goes. And again I have contributed to the common good. Money is more easily got than earned. Perhaps I have just so attained my own fullness, which is seen precisely in the compatible

character of my present wife, who is similar to me, and we lack nothing and are not "marginal members" of society only because we sometimes live — on the margin and have a different style.

AUTISTIC SYSTEM AND AUTISTIC INDIVIDUAL

My paternal grandmother had some autism, as does the son of an acquaintance from a film — but I did not believe this, because my grandmother was a successful pedagogue and a head teacher. That diminishes the result of the effort of one who helps and creates anger in everyone. But I held out to the end and saw how much we are all victims of the same situation. I will not say that you do not want it and yet you do evil, but that we do not want to suffer, neither of us, and yet we suffer. I am reading just now how a mother drowned her autistic child. She was of sound mind, never convicted, conscious — but also suicidal. She could not believe why this was happening to her, nor how to bear it. Lucky I do not work in criminal law as I had wished. That is a "half-world", as my fellow solicitor says — but also the real world. People are full either of hatred or of empathy or of apathy towards her, and in comparisons with the system, the other sex, other states. And the female judge concluded: "This tragedy obliges the system to do everything so that help is available to all, so that something like this should not be repeated." But it will be repeated. I said this on television in Klaićeva. It is unfortunately not the last case, because the system cannot — more than the individual — confront its own weakness, and not only by absolute prevention! The direction of fall is often double. In her hands the mother held a rosary. Apart from that child, me, you: who in fact needs help most (alongside the real punishment)? The mother. Not because she is a woman, not because she is innocent, not because she is a murderer. Because she is — *a human being*. She maintained that the doors of the competent institutions had been closed to her! But the system cannot go to prison. Nor does it need to. Nor need it burn out in empathy. It need only remain to the end — a soldier of universal goodness. But I often notice that even "autism" or other

psychological or other illness can be — a means of justification and spiritual laziness. On one side, it would appear that "healthy people" may be called to war, harassed, expected to be perfect, to work, to be disciplined — and the sick not. On the other side, the sick are often privileged or further traumatised and classified into the same basket. The process is mutual.

MICHEL FOUCAULT — DEHUMANISATION OF US, (MY)HUMANISATION OF THE SYSTEM

At the start of this short part, let me return to my own problem. Today in my family there is the case that *a sick person depends on the help of a sick person* and indeed on the help of a fairly *sick system*. Here even money cannot be decisive, although it offers the apparent freedom of choice of spending.⁴³ Today the problem of inequality is not in equality but in non-equality, for even a spirit which is "disturbed" is regarded as something "modern good and empathetically protected" — and when it is not controlled it is strictly punished and rejected. The bureaucracy of which I have spoken is also necessarily a *calculated system* that treats empathy too — let us say, through *pragmatism* (from top down). That is even not new to me. But every politics begins from human ideas and people. However, in the state apparatus it must look at humanity *mechanically*, so as to sustain the existing system of values it has brought forth — that is, to protect its own organism, or at least a part of it and a certain set of individuals. So

even the bottleneck in the system is truly — both deliberate and undeliberate. But it is brutally unempathic to the human being who is dying and does not receive his right, and even works or has worked for the system or the ideology in power. Another has luck and is well in the system but does not know why others are unhappy and so draws his conclusions.

Citizen dissatisfaction does not suit the system, but the system carefully chooses and follows the dose of dissatisfaction and the social layer or generation that makes it, and whether it represents danger to the order. It is not someone in an office secretly studying and listening to millions of people; that is general logic. That is both real and sad always — and so it is until we see it; we live in a quite different "world". Awareness and work on oneself are therefore the key to my consciousness. Although I was grateful when they treated my father, I could not believe what degree of *habituation* and coldness was present (and latent nervousness) — and my father was sedated as soon as he complained that he could endure no more, and they were changing the catheter on him roughly. And yet they helped. His rights and will we had not formalised earlier, so we had to do so on the run, and notaries even refused to come to the hospital. Pressure is often mutual and depends on the right time. The human being, only while healthy, is under the illusion that they reign over dignity and happy themes. How is it that my grandmother and grandfather died precisely shortly after the hospital or operation at the same place? Grandfather, as an international professor, waited three days even to be examined for his torn arm, and we had to pull some minor strings. With my grandmother they admitted that they did not resuscitate her because she was old, and that they did not know exactly why she had died, and for days carried out the autopsy. I agreed that there was no malicious intention here, but those same doctors of medicine, their colleagues, had that afternoon measured at home that she was for the moment in good condition. They also gave unmarked medications from the hospital, where one cannot prove who is at fault in case of error — the doctor or the technician — and at the court it would not be so important. In the worst case the legal person is sued, and satisfaction and the culprit are sought after someone has already died.

Doctors say they do this in "good intention". And why in good intention do they not label the medicine? Later, of course, the institution protects itself first. My grandmother herself did not want to go to hospital, but she was not aware of anything either. Yet, perhaps she was most aware when she wanted to die in peace on the bathroom floor.

In the case of someone for whom there is already no help, going to hospital or care home is in fact an added complication, and yet the family must justify itself before the law for having fulfilled the conditions which prescribe help and life-saving — and at the same time those laws "permit choice in treatment" (if it can even be articulated) and that in an extremely contradictory way at times. So a person must act in life and *preventively* — and then we have heightened stress and the need for control, and appear obsessed with death. No one expects an early illness, and anticipated declarations and statements on prolonged treatment, and the distribution of inheritance during life, greatly save the family from the *administrative bottleneck*, I noticed. Likewise testamentary agreements during life prevent later conflict in the family. And jurisdiction for opening the grave is constantly shifted onto others. Firms demand a multitude of formalities — different from what is needed in practice, or from what we expect, and they are of course expensive. If a person has no savings and is not psychically prepared for these torments, while they have not yet finished mourning or recovered from their own illnesses, after a while of "letting go" they enter into a *mincer of flesh and spirit, which at the same time protects its own flesh and spirit*. They call me from the hospital, the police, and the office at 10 in the evening to ask what the catch is — they find this anomaly of non-cooperation strange.

Moreover, today there is pressure from the EU to carry out *humane projects* and to draw funds — which is in the interest of all — but in such a way that conditions and property thresholds are eased, and so on this very day there is a bottleneck. There is a shortage of both logistics and staff, and now all wait while they die, and afterwards the family disputes whether the

heirs are allowed and ought to receive arrears at all. The system either blocks rights, or when it must give them broadly, then it is congested.

Of course, the state is not the one which always "controls" the matter, but it — wants to control it. So today we have a *white strike* of the workers themselves in social work, who become administrators, just as we lawyers in the best case become "secretaries".

I, as an unemployed lawyer and waiter, take work from waiters, and they must then do something else, or quality drops, and so it goes in a circle. The problem is not to descend to "lower jobs"; the problem is that by this we create still greater disorder than if we were on the unemployment register in our category. And the register too serves itself, and there too sociologists and "humanists" work, which again "administrates the life" of degree-holders. That is why I felt myself neither a pupil nor a teacher. So everyone becomes to everyone *surplus or deficit*, and one does not know who knows what or who is what. Dissatisfaction transfers to people within the system itself, while the system regards this as good or bad brake — but outflow of money from the budget is still the main measure. *Moderate dissatisfaction and the creation of non-competitive studies* is the purchase of time which shows how much society is as selfish as the individual who wanted "easy bread". The problem is that one has always come more easily or harder to bread than planned. The problem is either greed (hoarding in advance to insure against new poverty), or the breaking of spirit and body through powerlessness. All think industry is gone, and industry is — *everything*, as also is capital and property — everything, even in the state and societal systems of socialism in another way.

Even the help to long-fallen agriculture (because of people, politics, climate) is today — industrial. The family farm (OPG) on which I worked at my former wife's and at the seaside is the bloodiest work and low earnings, unless it is — *industrialised* and *collectivised* into a great system of single or associated OPG, and the problem of agriculture and investment has lasted since 1945. OPG *does not exist* in fact, and family liberty or "eco products" likewise do not exist in essence. While my former wife worked on these

projects as an agronomist, and her father in the field was in mortal pain from *diverticulitis* as he drove the tractor, I saw that without great infrastructure and great investment in technique and dubious preparations or expensive greenhouses, there is no future. And if all this is realised, one becomes only part of a great networked industry which has cover from European money — and I myself do not know the sources of all this and how anyone formally and informally reaches it. So in fact an *anti-OPG* policy is being promoted that in fact at least saves the OPG, since otherwise they have completely vanished, just as we young have vanished. From the former potential sovereign industry, sovereign agronomy, and sovereign tourism — today everything has become debt-based, dependent, and artificially apparent. And life in the village is mistakenly advertised as easy.

When my grandfather spoke with soldiers outside, he had a mutually respectful relation. But when a soldier with a pistol came to his daughter's exam to him, the relation automatically changed — even if there was no bad intent. Anyone can attend an exam, and he has a permit for a weapon, but who would dare give a female student a *fail*? Surely no one looks the same upon my doing an internship from some humanitarian reasons — and there only the start of a "struggle" without end begins. And this is precisely what does not suit me. Not because that is not normal, and because I refuse obedience. On the contrary, I am the first for correct hierarchy and equality or respect within it. But because I do not wish to live in two worlds in relations of which at least one is — *false*. There my spirit seeks freedom, however much it wishes to be self-critical. I would rather have a good or bad, wrong or right relation, with equal partners, than be in a *subordinated position* and not know why I am in it at all. But that is exactly the point. I *must not* know why I am in it, for then that relation is no longer one of subordination. No one fears the body of people — but their mind.

Once the police answered me that they were doing their job and that I must not know why they were checking me and why I must not urinate (I might only into my trousers) — for then they would be working against themselves and would put me as their employer, and that cannot be. They

did not say afterwards either why they had checked me at the petrol station, when they politely released me. When they arrested me after my wife's complaint they likewise did not wish to say. While all cases, including legal ones, look at the excessive action of the forces in the physical sense, no one looks at *the spiritual problem*. How great my fear was when three of them came for me at the seaside, while I am only painting a wall and weeping? And how dangerous their job too, when they do not know where they are going and know that people will resist orders from above? That two or three came, or that before the hospital they took positions in the rooms so they could approach me even from behind — that is in fact the greatest compliment for me and my spirit. For I am for the first time *respected* and even — feared? Whilst psychopaths regard this as a competition and a goal, my goal is not for any of us to be feared, but precisely — that there should be no fear. So the police later helped me to tidy the house and turn off the electricity before going to the station, and once they even returned me home so I would not have to take the bus. That is what is not seen in the newspapers — I *humanised the system* (which is composed of "people" alone) which tried to dehumanise me. And I in fact broke the logic of citizen and system, but in a way that is so positive that I "disarmed" all. If you shout and resist, only then are you weak. I did not want to be "emotionally intelligent", but only to survive and humanly help myself and others, or receive help. I cooperated and praised, without any calculation, police and other workers. When I brought presents and philosophical Christmas cards to the hospital, or to the police and the offices, the coldest officials sometimes changed their faces as though they had received a "revelation" — because this is unknown to them (particularly if it is not a bribe). Though some can interpret this as my *positive instability* — I in fact break stable monotony, because a human being is not and must not be a robot. I want only a "pause" and to introduce *humanity* into the system.

Later on — and to make explicit what runs beneath this whole section — **M. Foucault** was a French philosopher, historian, and theorist of the twentieth century who saw, already then, the post-war problem of the

modern democratic state. He analysed, much as Fromm did, the *modern illnesses and the real causes or networks hidden behind them*. This is not conspiracy thinking but a sober and often painful reading of the social dimension of various mental disorders, of the trends of life, and of expectations that shift over time. He himself does not wish to emphasise only this side, and I do not entirely agree with him to the end either, but his basic insights into what he called *biopower* are worth recalling here: an invisible torment or danger that runs through films, activisms, and perhaps through the very necessity of a system that controls a human species which is, in itself, hard to predict. What is hard must be placed into drawers and shackles so that the system can function. And in truth we are already trained to be in those drawers without being aware of it, until some discomfort arises or we come up against the wall of the question.

Foucault speaks, in short, of various depressions and even of *suicide as the culmination and the critical point*. The relation of society to suicide has evolved strangely — from *incitement* or *punishment* through to *medicalisation* (prohibition, semi-legality, attempted treatment of cause or consequence, where the two are often confused). What is being prevented — the collapse of prevention itself, the loss of resources, or both? Does the state control life or death through this, or is it afraid of the cost and its consequences? The state, on his account, wants neither death nor the full freedom of spirit — it wants *productivity*, or, one might add, *controlled non-productivity*. The individual is to be repaired and reintegrated into the system, even when this is a one-way street, and everything concentrates on mitigation rather than on cure.

Yet the state knows that pure coercion has no effect, and neither does pure benevolence. It holds *Weber's monopoly of force* and not only kills you but *prescribes how you shall live* — and this only because you yourself do not yet know how to live. I noticed this on my own ward at Jankomir, where most patients were educated or working people who through schooling, volunteering, or various jobs had functioned reasonably well. One had been collecting cigarette butts in the city without a permit, and that was

apparently the "trigger" for his internment. Another had had a one-off outburst and, once he had sobered up, was the very last person who would do such a thing. It even seemed to me that we were watched over with too much attention — beds were made up for us, we were fed. It is hard to call this a deception. It is, rather, a strange combination of *intimidation and norms one must not break*, together with considerable freedom within them; with non-compulsory activities one has, in fact, more free time and idleness than anywhere else. But for me, this was itself the problem. How far we were a resource to be followed up in further work, and how far cure to full health is even possible, was not clear to me, because I did not return. I had a choice — but only once I had left. Inside, one depends entirely on examinations, and the doors are on a code.

Therapies are paid for from somewhere, people receive wages, we are *normalised* but not therefore *normal*. We are watched so as not to cause trouble, yet our freedom remains. The state apparatus is as slow as the individual. It is not a cancer to be cut out "win or die". It is a long game, and I have chosen the long game, but a rare one. As Foucault sees it, the problem lies in an unconscious *network of power*: you are not in an ordinary conversation, you are in the detection-zone of the most powerful apparatus. It is hard to say that there are more powerful legal apparatuses within a state than the State Attorney's Office, the anti-corruption bureau, the Ministry of the Interior, the intelligence service, social services, psychiatry, and the Tax Office. The state is neither a black devil nor an angel; it is a machine that "does its job". And here Foucault and I agree, with one further addition of my own: *our diagnoses are not too large and too dangerous; they are too small and too incomplete*. That is why criticisms strike the state both when it is too strict and when it is too lenient. A poor but concrete description on a few pages is not great help, but it is a direction for everyone further down the line, including the courts. Only the sum of testimonies — as on an ecclesiastical tribunal — produces a wider and even deeper diagnosis. The state, in fact, sees this well, and yet it cannot intervene fully, because that intervention would itself produce a new diagnosis.

All of this is not theoretical for me. It is the same machine I encountered in the hospital wards where my grandmother and grandfather died, in the notarial refusals when my father could no longer travel to sign, in the registrars who could not enter a death certificate within the legal deadline, in the funeral firms with their multiplied formalities, in the inheritance offices that called us at ten in the evening to ask "what the catch was" — as though it were strange that someone should not cooperate enthusiastically with the machinery of mourning. It is the same apparatus that medicalises my suicidality, normalises my anxiety, classifies my grief into administrative categories. And it is the same apparatus that I, in turn, *humanise* — by bringing biscuits, by writing a card, by remembering names, by refusing to shout. The diabolos — *the divided being and the divided system* — is the foundation of the life cycle and even of business, and the only response, beyond Foucault, is to refuse the division within oneself first.

HENRY JACOBY

The author **Jacoby** — fairly long ago, in the 1970s — wrote of "*The Bureaucratisation of the World*".⁴⁴ He raised great interest and is still topical today, though built upon. Let me not repeat that I read from the original book and publisher GLOBUS/ZAGREB and NOVI SVIJET, the 1984 edition, and the afterword was by Eugen Pusić, while the editors and publishers were colleagues and friends — my grandfather Ante Marušić, Adolf Dragičević, and Božo Kovačević. And let me not cite pages from 56 onwards — I have said that my goal is not to prove but to bear witness about problems that no longer ask for citation and advancement, and where my whole book may be digitally checked as to whether it is authentic and educative.

That author emphasises interesting phenomena that "torment us". Just as the gene of resettlement from Dalmatia torments me, the combativeness that has fallen silent here and been replaced by physical security, but where I have both freedom and greater peace for creation and for the use of my diplomatic and other intelligence, so many people are tormented by the "iron cage". This may be a political cage, ideological, climatic, family, work, educational, and any other. But here it concerns the problem — too often and too rarely spoken of — of bureaucracy as someone who protects our body but not our spirit. For it is someone who

uses us, and we use it. "The emergence of the modern state is accompanied by utopian visions. These visions are rational, unlike religious utopias..." is one of the quotations. Furthermore, the author sees even in **Thomas More's** utopia bureaucratic administration that would (as once also in the Poljica community) reach into all pores of life for the sake of order. In the 16th century already there was the idea that no resident might move without permission of the competent authorities and a passport. From feudalism to absolutism, the rulers in Prussia or France no longer accepted the wilfulness of the nobility and self-standing folk (such autonomy as we too had, and for which our local noble family also fought, working themselves and with hired hands in that part of Dalmatia). Independence from taxes and the security of property was the priority among great powers, while health-care and the rest was not networked or was private help and trade.

Today this is unimaginable, of course, since we should have neither roads nor firemen nor water nor electricity. But still we have the feeling of giving more than receiving. The ruler's logic is simple — control, rationality, and predictability. Of course, the problem is not always in the ruler, still less in his logic. The problem is not in loss of individuality, which never is and can be wholly independent, and is not good today. Rather the problem is that he has created — "the rule of the office", which is a living force that without reason in fact strives for its own extension (paperwork and posts), survival, gain, and even the feeling that it is the one which rules — not only the people but the ruler. For rulers change, and each of them needs the bureaucracy — and there it has become, instead of tool and instrument, goal and authority rather than means. Of course, it is dead and fluid, and there is the paradox. In today's *digital* age it has not vanished but has only extended to 24/7, and written requests are in the main ever more frequent, as are waits. There are of course positive shifts (e-government, e-land — though not all can use them equally always, and it is not yet regulated). Even loss of privacy is not the problem. Bureaucracy has always actually shielded society from arbitrariness and bound the collective — but it increased *alienation*. Democracy and free work, political opinion and

hobbies, partly save a person to remain what they are — a person. The problem behind feudalism is also the lasting loss of responsibility, which became the main argument of "the hierarchy of office" even at the Nuremberg Trials. Persons in administration know the processes and the loopholes before the people and the authority know them. They have alienated themselves equally from the people, as the people from them, but we live in a strange parasitic symbiosis and half-happiness.

Instrumental reason is the structural necessity which created the effect or illusion that we are realistically limited in life and even in death. The main problem is that bureaucracy — *has no value* but only a robotic procedure, although it does have some goal. That is a necessary evil today, and belonging to the local group has been replaced by belonging to the general apparatus, which both protects and stifles you. Identity has become cold, not lost. There is the essence of the new depression. Now created freedom is latently threatened by the bureaucracy's demand, whereas earlier by swords and politics. Many of us have the feeling that these two currents will alternate, and that we are finally defeated precisely in the most successful century, I would say. Earlier you knew concretely who was the danger, and there was no permanent threat that could not be foreseen. Earlier the office existed too, but as a nobiliary strategy of seeking protection from the ruler against local exactions. Bureaucracy protects our safety — even army and police do — but we pay for that in a manner worse than money: with the psyche and with the loss of our history. Yet that is still a real price and transaction which we perhaps even desire, but with which we cannot reconcile after so many centuries of other habits.

In the book Weber himself is cited, predicting "the slavery of the future" — in which we shall be forced to live as helpless as the ancient Egyptians (if not Israelites). Those small cogs are no longer a passing stage, and bureaucracy is even at the top of the UN today. Bureaucracy provokes fear in the more labile, for even by **Tocqueville** it "covers the surface of society with a network of small, complicated, detailed and uniform rules. It does not break wills, but softens them, bends them, and directs them; it rarely

forces action but constantly opposes itself to action". So he proposes association and local freedom.

So, in short outline, he speaks of the problem of various depressions and suicide as the culmination and critical point. It is already clear, and I mention it in another place, how the relation of society has evolved in a strange way from *encouragement* or *punishment* to *medicalisation* — that is, to prohibition and semi-legality with an attempt to treat the cause or consequence (often itself a question). What is one trying to prevent — the system's fall in prevention, or the loss of resources, or both? Is one controlling life or death through this, or fearing cost and consequences? The state in his view does not want death, nor full liberty of spirit, but wants *productivity* or *controlled unproductivity*, we may add. One tries to repair the individual and reintegrate him in the system, although that is often a one-way street, and all is concentrated on alleviating (not necessarily compelling) further deterioration.

The state knows in any case that pure compulsion and pure benevolence cannot have effect. It has **Weber's monopoly of force** and can not only kill you but determine "how you shall live". But again, because you yourself do not know how to live. I noticed therefore that on my ward were largely educated or working people who, through schooling, volunteering, or some jobs, had even worked well. One had collected cigarette ends without permit in the city, and that was apparently the "trigger" for committing him. Another had an outburst, and when sober had been someone who would least of all have made such an outburst. It seemed to me that we were even followed with too much attention, beds tidied, food given. It is hard to say that this is a deception. Rather simply, in the hospital there is a strange combination of awe and norms which must not be broken, and great freedom within this. Indeed, alongside some activities which are not forced, one has the greatest of free time and idleness. But for me that was a problem. How much we are a resource to be followed in further work, and how possible treatment is at all to recovery, was not clear to me, since I did not return. I had the possibility of choice, but only when I had left.

Inside one wholly depends on examinations, and the doors are under a code.

THE TRUE "MINCING MACHINE"

We are — *pushed into dependence on the state by the state, but it is not the (sole) culprit nor the judge* of that. And we, until we rule ourselves, or if we have no source of income, cannot equally and freely have any stance, nor work, nor think. After all, people, even doctors, generally cannot and must not step out of their own domain, and indeed do not themselves know the whole history and politics either of the apparatus or of the patient, except in basic outline.

Through the effect of mutual **inverse mirrors** a person often feels safer, more valued, and freer in the hospital, the state, and society than outside it. And it really seems this is flight from the outer world and the other side of society, which is itself madder, because it runs only after itself. But outside is in fact — the real world; and inside, an illusion. Yet even this is relative. Ever more often we witness alleged criminal offences within the state apparatus, not against it. The system above all does not recognise the possibility that we are in fact only "more normal and different", and that we flee competition and the merciless market and are tired of the struggle for survival. But the state again is not so apathetic, and real mental illness is greater than ever. After all, those who work in the state likewise first want to survive themselves. So all is both reality and fiction. Whether the greater goal is control of our life, mind, or spirit, I discuss later — but this fact that we are pawns is not some perfidious conspiracy against people. We *are* it. And when such people do not control ourselves, then still less can we expect that others will control us in such a way that we can have both the sheep and the money.

SOCIALLY-CONDITIONED SUICIDE PREVAILS!

Individuality and belonging in every option are hard to disentangle in the human being who is always part of something, and a social being. But by what does this title draw such a black and accusing result, when the very premise and hypothesis or *thesis of the book is that both the problem and the solution are mutual*? It is that sociologists, statistics, and researchers — among them **FFOS** or data analysed at universities such as Zadar between 2001 and 2017, and in **Howard Kushner** or **Open Yale Courses** — always ascribe models of suicide by majority or by two thirds to: *the anomic and egoistic type*.⁴⁵ That includes lack of integration but also of love, which is integration and society too. In the firmness of the family Durkheim also finds a pillar of stability — not only national or religious communities. But the family today is ever more unstable, and singles in Croatia number between one and two million. In this epidemic of loneliness, divorce, the digital age, these two types are not always so categorically classified, since today other patterns are used. But the problem is that in the other half of suicidal motives — those at the personal level (illness, disorder) — it is again a matter of *societal problems*, which are often a greater cause and root of instability than biology itself, which perhaps hereditarily and genetically remains only in the last **quarter**. There one comes in fact to a painful conclusion of three quarters, where half is directly caused by social motives, and this quarter which is often classified into the mental "basket"

⁴⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Viking, 1963). Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (Rinehart, 1955), where the thesis appears that we treat ourselves for illnesses we have ourselves created. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) and the famous image of the "iron cage" (*stahlhartes Gehäuse*); also *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* on bureaucracy as both the most rational and the most dehumanising mode of administration. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II (1840): "[democratic despotism] does not break wills, but it softens them, bends them, and directs them; it rarely forces one to act, but it constantly opposes itself to one's acting." Henry Jacoby, *The Bureaucratization of the World* (University of California Press, 1973); the author cites the Croatian translation in the Globus/Novi Svijet edition (Zagreb, 1984), with afterword by Eugen Pusić and edited by, among others, the author's grandfather **Ante Marušić**, Adolf Dragičević, and Božo Kovačević.

is in fact also a latently social problem. Not to mention the outcomes of treatment.

Here, however, it is no longer essential whether it is a question of fragile personalities who contributed to their own ruin: the *conditio sine qua non* is social dissatisfaction. That is a fact, not an accusation, as many immediately regard it subversively, aversively, hatefully, or revolutionarily. Society is not a tangible category nor a conspiracy nor something so external to ourselves and our macro-worlds. But contamination is often mutual, as is help. A sense of importance, respect, and work sometimes leads to positive or negative exhaustion, where everything then comes to us as "noise" in tunnel vision, and then we forget about healthy life and healthy relations, for which we no longer have nerves. So one comes to resentment toward family, spouses, neighbours, nature. This does not refer only to old age, but especially in it many fall into depression and negativity as a channelling of energy and even of good wishes for the meaningfulness of life. And it is not a matter of clinical so much as "ordinary" senile or "pensioner's" and unemployment depression, dementia, or however else they call it.

I see for myself how healthy people in offices "crack" and break, and simply have a burden with which they hardly cope — not some inherent illness or addiction. I myself feel in another place and space, especially the Mediterranean, where I am from, that I have fewer psychic disturbances, though there are other problems people do not see. And how at the holidays I did not feel and act with company in the village as in the city in school. That is not because of work and season, but my whole set, reputation, and activity was different and significantly more positive in conditions that are freer. Only I know that, as in war, the young men are very different at the beginning. They start fresh, in the feeling of adventure, meaning, and togetherness. And "the lads change when they come home from the army", as the famous song says. As though that little memory and own personhood is slowly lost and then perhaps evoked by force — through art, or some aggression, new addiction, lostness, and all the rest that leads to ruin and the loss of original identity. With my paternal

grandparents, the long-term life (despite obvious faults and lines of weak resistance which I witnessed through all my youth) was, among other things, owed precisely to a regular, balanced habit of sleep and feeding, while they had it. For long-term studies prove today, I see this very day, that this is a greater way of protecting the organism than all great investments of strength in fitness, nutrition, or "weekend exercise". They proved this also at the *London School of Economics and Political Science*, where my grandfather had been. That light exercise is proof that people exercise even when they are not conscious of it, and that light regularity is in fact easier and better than sudden changes. But when they lost this — they died.

"FALSE" EIGHTIES

Few would expect that the eighties of the past century were in fact an illusion of romance and ideal life. Perhaps it was culturally productive — a stillness before the storm, or a melancholy. But everything has its deep beginnings, and that period was in many ways more critical than the merely transitional and war-marked nineties. People expected great change, and the going to war itself was often not naïve but idealistic. When general destruction was seen and the irrationality in something that was led in fact rationally — or only irrationally — people began to have their mind disassembled, and felt once more lost and deceived. They did not regard everything as the passing phases of an imperfect world, as temporary decisions and the remembering of what was good and human in conditions where this can no longer perhaps even be perceived. The habit of change is heavier than the process itself. It is like the cooling of a wound. But the heating of the wound through various crises, interests, and provocations did not begin only in political spheres.

In present-day Croatia the number of divorces, abortions, and suicides was at its highest precisely in the 1980s. In the years before the war there were over 1,100 suicides, almost double today's figure. Migration from

rural areas and villages to the cities, and the great burdens of sustaining family and work alongside the collapse of industry, meant a great collapse already before the war itself. Today's **alienation** and individuality, or bureaucracy primarily of the spirit, is not worse than the past one, regardless of political fears and freedoms. Today there rules a tyranny of psychological success, while before there ruled a tyranny of fear and survival in a still more tangible existentialist mode. In Yugoslavia one could always blame "the system", socialism, the blocs, and later the "robbers" — while today there is no one to blame but reality and oneself, and that is a situation we detest. Then there ruled rigidity, and despite enormous subtle and historical signs there ruled also the illusion of the system's non-disintegratability. My father said that they did not believe the communist party could ever disintegrate, nor the state, regardless of Tito's death and personal wishes. The "concretisation" and modernisation was then a greater blow to the patriarchal system than today, when it has watered itself down by itself, and we may at most feel certain neo-liberal revolts or counter-reactions and desires for a return to tradition and the village — despite impossible conditions and climatic changes.

Roots were lost in the first and hardest way, and back then one could perish over "the expectations of the collective", while today the collective is no longer so directly aggressive — rather, "our own expectations" are disintegrating, and there is the problem of the disappearance of the collective as identity itself, with these or those borders. Today there is less pain and more deadening and dullness. While we are still all responsible for ourselves, we shall yet establish the sorrowful fact that socially-conditioned ruin or suicide is in a far greater scope, because a human being is also a social being. The insignificant or vanished class is today perhaps most dangerous to itself rather than to the system as such. Plus, the young constantly move and return, and this is again contrary to public interest — but no punishments or rewards can affect the general lostness and insecurity not only in the domestic but in the European and global international order. While at the example of the lady at the dentist's I emphasised that our decision and assumption of a stance toward every

crisis and provocation is personal and so easier (but in the long term less successful to blame only society), likewise at the example of my paternal grandmother and grandfather I show how their "grey zone" of responsibility toward family, environment, and future, in its active or passive self-destructiveness, is something that cannot be ascribed to social conditions. Unless we exclude that they themselves had moved in from the village and so perhaps felt lost and drowned in a mass of despairers and an invisible generation. But in metropolises they did build their layer and careers, and it is not very convincing the grandmother's comparison that "older people in the village have it easier to live longer".

I, as young in the prime of strength in the village without institutions and hospitals, despite my resilience and habit that I can live also outside the city, did not last long and longed to return to Zagreb. Quiet burden as opposed to the freedom of going one's own way is always the question of how much our life is only ours, and we shall not enter in detail this theme, but later. The borderline state of the spirit or so-called *limes* has nothing to do either with socialism or capitalism, and my grandparents did not have bad pensions when both are added together, regardless that they are less than they could have realised abroad, where the cost too is greater.

AFTER SUICIDE: VIEWS OF THE FAMILY AND THE CHURCH

Many after suicides, especially the family members, do not support that act and point to the beauty of life regardless of hard contexts, and to responsibility toward kin who love and need them. But again, not everyone panics equally before and after that act, and often the real motives are not even known after a psychological autopsy. It is a matter of a mixture of factors, and in the spiritual sense the Church and even **Saint Padre Pio** regard the act as a grave sin against life (concerning, after all, a killing), but with an equal chance that that soul may or may not perish. Apart from prayers and intercessions, and the weight of psychological pressure or

delusion which diminish guilt, attention is given mostly to the moment of spirit immediately, or a hundredth of a second, before the very killing. In people who possess firearms, that period is shorter than in those who jump. But the carrying-over of inertia or mood is something which has foundation and a this-worldly/other-worldly danger which I analyse in this book too. It is a question often of self-condemnation of spirit, where body and soul are victims.

Some have written, including **Marx**, that "bureaucracy has the state in its possession... that is its private property", and not the reverse. **Nietzsche**, whom I cite later, said that the state is "the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it lies, and it crawls: 'I, the state, am the people'." **Bruno Rizzi** would say that the state no longer belongs to the citizens but to "the class of those who govern them", and that is already known but not yet sufficiently said. Function changes essence — and this awareness is not for depression but, I hope, for liberation. This is emphasised also by Jacoby, and others speak of seeking our values within ourselves. Sometimes we are hindered in contemplation, too. We want both peace and unrest. And many southerners like me adapt more easily culturally but harder psychologically to the north, while the north does not move at all to the south and cannot adapt. They have more in fact of "depression" living in their world and not knowing a better, while knowledge of a once healthier (not perfect) Mediterranean world makes me both wakeful and dormant — both stronger and more melancholic. Fortunately, bureaucracy hates extremes, so the fall into poverty from the middle stratum is hard unless one makes wrong decisions. But growth too is almost impossible. Why should we, then, grow and be dissatisfied with our stable position? That is rather a crisis of our own identity — for what does "upper middle class" actually represent? Higher or lower stratum? The middle stratum is not in fact vanishing, but is excessively consolidating today. Wealth on the other side creates greater danger and surveillance.⁴⁶

The paradox of the safe cage and of our moderate dissatisfaction must be in fact a turning point where we decide for stability and the best life — or precisely the opposite, since there is no ideal. Only trends change. *Status schizophrenia* is the product both of external changes and of our own crisis of identity and lie, when we thought we could have both the sheep and the money. The greatest potential for happiness can have in fact — *the lower middle class*, which has at least the tendency or illusion of further growth. Precisely **Anne Case** and **Angus Deaton**, the Nobel laureate, regard *suicide* as part of the broader collapse of the middle and lower-middle class, and not just a free-standing and vice-ridden act. Life has not vanished, but the way of life. **Lieberman** would call this "social pain" or the feeling of being rejected, which begins from a smaller community and goes toward a broader one, but breaks exclusively within us, if we are not strong. Although the brain and soul ache nearly as much as a leg — and doctorates point to this — strength and discipline have become necessity rather than luxury, and indeed a real opportunity. Moral injury, status anxiety, and all the rest are only modern old enemies who have already been read. The pattern cannot always be predicted, but the constant can certainly be taken into account. *Relative deprivation* and *the double generational burden* create greater anxiety, but we also have a better position and more time.

Our southern noise, when it ends here in a cold wall, on one hand abolishes the fear and on the other creates it. With a greater cost, in fact, our adaptation to the colder regions is even easier and possible, but it must have a "release" and legal valve — including this one. Restraining the character is easier, but has a greater cost and amortisation, like a stronger

engine on weaker roads. In silence people in fact most kill themselves, and silence is a bad sign. But noise too must have limits. The double life I must replace with an "inner identity", even through tears, but in such a way that this does not destroy me but creates the value of total contemplation of life. That inner harmony and value in chaos (and not the reverse) is what **Csikszentmihalyi** also advocates. And it need not be only religious mysticism. Here I can recall also my late grandfather, who in exile in a hotel planted tomatoes in small flower pots and psychologically survived, whilst we mocked. He also carried a guitar with him when they expelled him.

Today, in many ways, *nobles* become serfs and have illnesses they did not have, but they are physically more protected. Yet alongside the problem of dying-out — even **Marx** said that "bureaucracy has the state in its possession... that is its private property". **Nietzsche** in the citation I shall give later: the state is "the coldest of all cold monsters". **Rizzi** would say that the state no longer belongs to the citizens but to "the class of those who govern them". Function changes essence, and this awareness is not for depression but for liberation. Within ourselves we must seek our values, as also Jacoby emphasises. But sometimes we are hindered in contemplation. We want both peace and unrest.

CHAPTER IV: “PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS”

PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORKS AND MY “PROCESS” OF WORKING THROUGH

Introduction

I should note at the outset that this chapter, too, is perhaps genre-ambiguous and indeterminate, and so I must define it within that constraint. The text is neither purely philosophical nor purely experiential, and it is least of all mystical. Nor has it been transcribed from elsewhere — the sentences are my own, the fruit of my thinking and construction (with the aid of concepts I did not, of course, all know from prior education). Errors lend the text its human quality. The text is, above all, deeply essayistic: one concept, with a concrete direction, a clear position, and a personal idea or struggle, is built up through philosophical and scientific currents that support and give coherence to both content and standpoint, whilst criticising others in their fundamental perspectives. “Living or authentic philosophy” is something that exists and must exist, and in that capacity it is not a “competitor” to precise science but a work in its own right. If someone asks where is my proof and source that Eichmann invoked the categorical imperative in his defence, or that it was Kant who introduced it, or that Hegel and Schopenhauer criticised it, or indeed my grandfather and his friend and neighbour — I have no need to “prove” this, because a *living essay* is “**my word**”. How much warrant, truth, and value that word carries, every reader may verify for themselves and by whatever method they choose. Law, psychology, and philosophy are not my ends — what concerns me is the analysis of the human being and the bioethical position of causality.

The first thing I would relinquish in life, if I had to, is formal education. The formal titles, positions, and scholarly articles I have published I regard

as having „NO VALUE“ WHATSOEVER when set against the reflections and experiences I have lived through on the edges of life and death. This is not an insult levelled at the system by someone who has gone far enough within it to have earned the standing to turn and face it; it is simply a demonstration that lived and academic thinking belong to two entirely different categories. I completed my entire degree by studying books that are publicly available to everyone, serving as my own mentor in literally everything, and then simply demonstrated what I knew, whereupon the institution affixed its stamp. The institution taught me nothing — and I say that without offence, because it is true. I could equally have been a lawyer and a secondary school teacher having acquired all of that knowledge entirely outside the formal ECTS framework. The only difference would have been the title: I would then have been called a “quack.” Does anyone seriously believe it would have been difficult for me to use a search engine to find or verify a citation for every sentence? Or that a quack knows no law while a lawyer always does? Law is a supreme discipline, and yet the quantity of ignorance possessed by many practising solicitors and notaries — and charged for accordingly, despite modern techniques and hard-won judicial examinations — is staggering. This is not an “excuse”: even in amateur work — in film, music, and sport alike — I have achieved results among professionals. Those results are not “genius,” but they are proof of how much quality dilettantism can carry more “blood” than printed pages of definitions memorised for an examination and forgotten the moment one steps outside. This is why, in my grandfather’s day, examinations were sometimes conducted over dinner. My grandfather would ask the professor: “Shall we begin the examination?”, and the professor would reply: “The examination is over, colleague.”

Although I do cite specific books and pages, what interests me is not the citation but my own life’s standpoint — in what may well be the last works I produce — a standpoint that may be of use to someone. I have not followed the conventions of a “self-help” book or a lay biography, nor have I adhered strictly to academic methodological rules. The use of different fields or disciplines within currents or sub-branches is a risky undertaking —

though actually less offensive than applying the same principle within my own legal science, where some subjects bear no connection to one another whatsoever (financial law and administrative or criminal law, for instance). Philosophy, by contrast, builds upon and divides a single essence into multiple aspects, and has long been regarded as the precursor, the “mother” of the social and humanistic sciences, among the earliest of faculties and so forth. In purely essential and existential perspectives, I hold that my personal position is deeply philosophically grounded as one possible (not the only possible) truth, independent of my articulation — which is either simpler than others’ or, in some cases, others have been “unnecessarily complicated.” I believe everyone is entitled to a “middle” philosophical position with a clear and definitive standpoint. Unlike in law, where one field can remain entirely separate from another, in philosophy I find it impossible to conceive of something that is good without it also being beautiful and correct; and so from ontology and existential questions I must necessarily connect, at least to some degree, with ethics in the broader sense, and with aesthetics. Philosophy, theo-philosophy, psycho-philosophy, or lay philosophy is something frequently regarded pejoratively — dismissed even as a kind of senile psychosis or an obsolete archetype with no further utility — but in my view it is both the beginning and the end of our knowledge and of our values. All other sciences are either auxiliary or secondary.

I began with law, the arts, pedagogy, and physical work or lived experience, and I arrive at conclusions that proceed *from below* and *a posteriori* rather than, in the student’s manner, *a priori*. In this way I align myself neither with the student nor with the apparatus (the professor), nor with the kind of unprepared street-corner discussion. Yet, after **Montaigne**, **Cioran**, **Weil**, and **Frankl**, I can see that “living philosophy” has not died and that it is, in fact, lacking. I still remember my grandfather’s remark about those who would try to impress a professor “with spectacles and a beard” by deploying expressions all day and night; and equally the adults who would say with a smirk: “Study anything — just not philosophy.” There were even philosophers who wrote ironic tales about how the philosopher is the

one who “spoils every relaxed dinner party.” Despite all of this, philosophers themselves were often not like that, and sometimes lived in direct contradiction to their own solemnity and ideas. I connect disciplines and branches deliberately, because in my view they are bound together not only by essence and vision but by a comprehensive kind of anthropological analysis.

Humanity endures and lives precisely through reason and a general morality — whether opportunistic and utilitarian or not — and through the inner imperative of work and the pursuit of knowledge, and not through madness and anarchy. This section constitutes roughly half of the entire book, and is for me personally the most demanding.

I. **Kant** argued, in essence, that *good form* is itself reflected in and through content. It shapes and discloses that content, and through this communicatively confirms whether the content is of value or not. In aesthetic (and also in epistemological and ethical) terms, Kant is very demanding on this point, and it is something that troubles me as well. In certain art forms — such as the films of **Ivan Martinac**, who was a film club colleague of mine and by training an architect — “form even creates content” (*D. Radić*). His method of working is the opposite of my own hurried and often disorderly “fever.” For, analogously, poor form and poor methodology not only repel the reader but conceal and at the same time destroy the value of the content they were meant to convey. Content is, of course, the final aim, and should be — it is not merely in the service of form. The problem today is either a roboticised writing assisted by an abundance of bloodless *copy-paste*, AI, Google, and other tools (and trivial recording in the arts), devoid not only of methodological but of artistic, scholarly, or personal credibility. The issue is not simply that both produce an impression of *the poor*, but that they often “deceive” in one direction or another — and what is good and what is true goes unrecognised. Every reader wants an easy text. Although technique is necessary, if it is in the service of the human being, today all authors are in conflict with an

abundance of information, with themselves, and with one another, because they perceive in their own access to data a kind of relief, whilst on the other hand they encounter a suffocating proliferation of doubts about procedure, verification of originality, proof of authorship, and academic integrity. All of that is both difficult to demonstrate and exhausting, and today all the energy is consumed by form and the compilation of data. What kind of AI could write sentences like the ones I am writing now? Furthermore, the *hypocrisy of the system* is, in my view, polished to the point where the greatest dishonesty is often found precisely within *legal principles* — for example, the writing of articles with *ten co-authors*, where the first carries the last and is credited with nearly equal or half the value of the work, when that contribution may amount to a single sentence or even a case of plagiarism. Only when one has lived simultaneously in both the street and the high corridors, and has also encountered one's own limits, can one see the advantages and disadvantages of all three worlds.

Alongside all of this there exists a host of so-called *ghost authors*, mentors who both do and do not work with their authors, and authors whose aim is only the success of the paper and their scores, not the essence and *eros* of the problem. Today a great deal is known, yet the fundamental questions remain unresolved. Of those five per cent who complete their studies on time (at least at my faculty), at least half are not genuinely and intrinsically interested in their discipline and in justice, but in advancement and survival. This is understandable, but to what extent then does the percentage of those who truly wish to master what they are engaged with reach? I would not even enter into the question of how much the system benefits from good and bad students alike, and from the mass character of study where the individual approach of my grandfather's era is rare and impossible — yet where the arithmetic “adds up” for everyone regardless. Some receive a salary and tuition fees, others a degree as a status symbol, and most are satisfied. If I mention that our constitutions and laws are heavily copied from France, Germany, Italy, and Austria, and draw their foundations from Rome to such a degree that Rome appears as the future

and we as the past — then where has the innovative capacity of academic citizens become stuck across so many centuries?

Much is invested in knowledge, yet the greater problem is the *constant revision of regulations* and the pursuit of *anti-plagiarism programmes* and database access codes in a world of accelerating digital change. Knowledge is becoming easily available and *free of charge*, but ever less innovative, original, or in demand. There is even an “anti-intellectual” movement in the world, promoted by some of its leaders. Large projects are difficult to realise and finance, whilst small scholarly articles in the social and humanistic sciences find themselves at the very back of the queue. Form and administration have become such a “problem” that content is no longer a decisive consideration, or the conclusions are often opaque and contradictory — and these are among the reasons I myself resigned. As a student at the faculty I genuinely enjoyed clear, logical, lively, and engaging textbooks and examples. Already at the doctoral level, examinations were literally near-meaningless, drawn from scattered fields, and the path to the methodology of the doctoral thesis and the proposal of a topic would have required months upon months, money upon money, and check upon check before the material could even be assembled and manually processed.

After graduating and ten thousand hours of study, if a colleague and I were to sit down at a table, we would be unable to answer one another’s question: “What, actually, is law?” “A body of social rules...” — that would be the summit of our response. Neither the professors nor ourselves nor anyone else is to blame for this; it is the shameful want of innovation and critical capacity in the human mind as such. I encountered something similar when comparing the sources of the Omiš statutes with the conclusions of the distinguished old professor of statute law, whose sentences were accepted as scripture but contained conclusions that were questionable and contrary to the text itself. On the other hand, there are genuine authors for whom form, content, and the *eros* for *de lege ferenda* is what makes a scholar authentic — though practitioners rarely concern themselves with such things.

Here already is one example of a possible impropriety: an author sees how another author cites an original work, and from that citation copies the bibliographical details of the original work to make it appear as though he too has read it. It is impossible to prove the truth, and yet the “credibility” of the text is raised — whilst AI sometimes simply invents sources. This is part of why citations no longer particularly interest me. Even if it were demonstrated that the data was identical or implied transcription, it may be that the person actually *did* read that same original work and is being unjustly deprived of credibility as a result. Paraphrase and the use of others’ theses are perhaps the least of today’s problems. Whether what matters is knowledge or process, or both, is a question I continue to ask myself.

That **passion of mine, in its surges** — my conviction that the death penalty must not endure — resulted in my genuinely enjoying the work and writing beyond the “minimum.” There was an inner drive to it, and at last a freedom in writing, independent even of the later success of the work itself. Whilst other colleagues went to the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik to enjoy themselves and collect their final ECTS credits, I went because it was for me *a life theme and a life event* — a creative outpouring. For days I did not even attend to more pressing physical needs because they were not a priority, and I watched documentaries, compared texts, and translated.

If the topic is not sought after, or the author is not established and presentable, the *eros* will never be read out of the work. Neither philosophy nor law interested me even during my studies, let alone before. What attracted me was only the freedom and freshness after the general secondary school — which had been physically demanding as well — and we studied philosophy unsuccessfully, with constant “delays” in the curriculum, only in the final year. My teacher Dr Batovanja justified this by saying we would not manage to grasp anything, and she herself would linger long over the lessons. Then and now, after exactly twenty years, instead of the question “Why is there something rather than nothing” — which we only partially heard or understood — I have rather more “pressing” questions: “How is it that some of my contemporaries have

already died? How is it that some older people have died within a short time? How is it that the older generation is no longer the exemplar it once was? How is it that my father, with two of the most serious illnesses, has not yet received an inclusive disability allowance, whilst I have, and how did he survive at all? How is it that my grandfather, grandmother, and beloved pets vanished overnight — and have they truly vanished? How is it that they changed in character and in reason during their lives?” Only now do both sides of the philosophy, psychology, and spirituality interest me, because it is impossible to have the same direct insight as at eighteen. Abstract thinking must have its grounding in the concrete.

We may call the problem of today — in everything — *technology, technocracy, bureaucratisation, administration, meaningless procedure*, or anything we like. But it has never gone away; and here **Heidegger** “scented” the problem and in fact refused to be *pigeonholed* — and this is the one thing I most acknowledge in him, even as I later criticise certain aspects of his philosophical and human logic. Truth is a theme that interests me equally, in a way similar to my grandfather, who wrote his doctoral thesis on the subject through the lens of the sociology of knowledge. He received his inspiration whilst lying on the beach after the Second World War, whilst I began to pose questions about truth, death, and anxiety after life crises and experiences of that kind, in peacetime. Neither of us was motivated on this occasion by “boredom” or by education.

Whilst we all wonder whether we are anxious because things are bad or vice versa — whether human commerce and meritocracy are what drives or obstructs happiness, and whether we are satisfied with what we have been given — I move later towards a **monism** that is strictly ontological and *not* substantialist. If being and happiness are exclusively realisable through our own projection — as is held today in the new quasi-Eastern popular theories of “presence and the present moment” and all the rest — then we enter the concept of *absolute immanence* of everything; whereas I continue to distinguish the *transcendent* from the *immanent*, fleeing both religious passivity and secular “utopian” activity. Today’s answers frequently retreat

into the gratuitous inversion of traditional ideas and a strange *eclecticism* that offers *nirvana* — yet which no one has attained — or “sells” what it ostensibly claims is not for sale (self-help and self-realisation). Although both writing and recollection and “critique” can constitute secondary victimisation, they can equally be therapy. Before I explain my Christian, contemplative-loving philosophy and monism, I shall begin with the individual processes that have influenced my thinking and the formation of my position, whilst simultaneously testing my narrower and broader convictions. Let me first define what my profile is, if it can be called that.

This is the position of a **classical Christian fundamentalist idealist and theocentric personalist panentheist within a specific ontological monism**, one who builds his own position through an inner (and later outward and open) struggle with *nihilism*, *subjective existentialism*, and *objective and transcendental idealism*, and who moves towards *religious existentialism* using *phenomenology*, *eclecticism*, *syntheses*, and *syncretism* as auxiliary instruments in the formation of “his own” *philosophy*. This philosophy is an **ontological, constructive, and soteriological Observation of the human being** from love. In practical, moral-existential terms, the so-called “generally understood” moral categories scarcely concern me in this aspect, which touches on the ethics of behaviour. That ethics and decision-through-conviction pertains to the eschatological *creation, maintenance, or restoration* of the *real and spiritually fulfilled life* of the person who is being observed. Philosophy and theology here part company from the psychology of survival or the mere psychology of memory. We might even call it metaphysically “existential and theistic objective idealism.” It is precisely from the struggle with and (dis)agreement with the “limitation or totalitarianism” offered by the classical idealists that I shall now proceed, developing my thesis — however haltingly, through a stream of thought and a grand slalom rather than a fine slalom or any kind of “genius” downhill run.

AM I, THEN, A HEGELIAN OR A KANTIAN, AND WHAT DOES HEGEL OFFER TODAY?

We all know the sequence from the classical tradition — from Kant onwards — and I move around it, from the front or from behind. Conceptually, everything moves — as we know — through “law”, “history”, “rebellion”, “phenomenology”, and “absurdity”, through “nihilism”, and on to *various new-age postmodern, defeatist, eclectic* positions and so forth. Within all of this run debates about what is knowable and what is not; and threading through it all are, always, the Christians and the rest, and, relatively recently, the various existentialists.

Briefly, to insert this section since I refer frequently in the book to **Hegelian** dialectics and to Christianity — whilst rejecting the idea that the two must be in conflict — and drawing closer in a different respect to **Habermas** and others cited later. Only subsequently did I see that he, by a logic similar to my own, “de-sacralises” **Heidegger** as well: for Heidegger’s untouchable “mysticisms” of being (*Sein*) — with which I agree only insofar as he observes the value and wonder of being, and not as regards his definition of being or his treatment of the problem of the horizon of time as his wall — have passed from his personal *theism*, as we know, through the exclusion of God from his themes, and on to his “search for a new God.” More on him later.⁴⁷ I shall begin first with this *Hegelianism*, whilst there

⁴⁷ Many authors mask “authoritarian thinking” and exclude ethics, but the problem arises if the form of being is tied to it. Others then move into an active and far more “fanatical shaping of being” or existence than I do — I am perhaps somewhere “in between.” In the phenomenology of **Heidegger**’s era one discerns a “post-metaphysical,” closed or untouchable system that (commendably) critiques the secular and technocratic one. To work in this world whilst not being “of it” is something we all attempt with kid gloves when we engage with philosophy and theology in a practical or theoretical sense — but I do not think this need be a cause for shame. The problem is that Heidegger, unlike his dear colleague **Arendt**, entered politics, then withdrew, and became disillusioned (or stepped aside). Whilst everyone looked at his stance towards the ethics of politics and his burden of

will also be further discussion of my *pro-* and *anti-Heideggerianism*. The treatment is somewhat broader than the book's theme strictly requires, but it remains always relevant and important, since it concerns not only death but the relationship towards death (and towards life), and through that the relationship towards induced death and the will to suicide.

The esteemed and dear colleague of my grandfather, **Dr Pavo Barišić**, viewed **Hegel's** idea through a pan-European lens, for instance. He took *law* — my foundational discipline, from which I am somewhat in flight, although I regard it as something very concrete but also as labile as any historical and political “constitution” — as something that is the foundation of *agreement*

implication, he had in fact grasped the mistake he had made — that he had gone into politics, whereas phenomenology cannot be a political discipline (even if everyone were to think as he did, or as some party). Whilst others “cherish” good philosophers or believers into politics, even the best of them withdraw — not only out of fear, but because they see it is incompatible. People do not agree even on fundamental phenomena and values (though they are unaware of this) so as to be able to connect knowledge and morality all the way through to practice. Our knowledge and morality are so inscrutable even today that the world needs precisely what has always and only gone its way — the technological and generally moral (or generally beneficial) compromise of peace and physical progress, which still exists. But while many attribute this to the development of the Spirit, particularly the *Hegelians*, I see in that a delusion and an eternal “resetting” of the spirit with each new generation that brings both refreshment and new crises and falls, including its own death. This is why even if we hold firm ontological or metaphysical positions, since we do not have 100% proof and never will, we must remain in the world of imagination or otherworldly hope, however things turn out. Because if anyone understands, it is we intellectuals who understand that technical matters are the easiest to resolve and peace treaties the easiest to conclude — but that the root and the long-term solution of every problem is something at which reflection has no end, whilst our experience lasts only a few decades. This is why the “philosopher” can work on and resolve technical and physical questions in the world, but spiritual questions he cannot — and perhaps should not — mix with everyday life. If some political and technical option takes (validly or invalidly) some philosophical or religious option into its programme, that is legitimate and quite another matter, since the process runs in the opposite direction. To that extent I hold that Heidegger was constantly being “pulled back” in a “moralistic” direction, rather than being pushed and supported in his wish to isolate himself from any politics and morality whatsoever — which is what he wanted, yet all his posthumous archives and notebooks had to fear more than anything: being what he truly was — a philosopher.

and dialectic which prevents or builds upon the necessary law of *conflict or subjugation*. He looks upon Spirit and bureaucracy as a kind of *instrument of reason*, one might say, and here he emphasises both Hegel's original idea of a "European" bureaucracy (more optimistic than Weber's iron cage) and the point that Hegel's "Spirit" is something we build, rather than the reverse. Although he defends Štarčević's idea as progressive — contrary to received opinion — I nevertheless distance myself from the idea of the state as the "pinnacle of community" and return, *radically Augustinian*, to the state as "a necessary evil" — every state, without exception. In the end, every limitation of freedom (even in the name of a higher and perhaps more correct freedom) takes us far from any *Civitas Dei*. The idea of joining Kant and Hegel in a single ideology is a beautiful one, but in reality the question is which idea is the more *abstract*; and I always begin from the individual. Every sin and every decision in history has proceeded from a *person*. The devil lied; Eve took and seduced; Adam was irresponsible and cowardly, and so on. They did not all three appear before God's judgement together. That we are directed towards one another is the foundation of "my philosophy" as well — but it proceeds precisely from person to person, and only then do we have the eventual product of freedoms that shape something like a customary order which the individual takes up as his own. History does not move by the force of abstract rules — neither God's kingdom nor ours — but through the relationship of God—I, I—other, and so on. Even Moses' Laws are not a collective instruction: they are a covenant in which the law applies to each person individually. It does not say: "Ye shall not kill" — it says: "Thou shalt not kill."

Those cited below (the radical left or right) view bureaucracy as a self-sufficient evil or absurdity, or as an implicit or explicit instrument that every idealist (left or right) nonetheless requires — an instrument which, in this better version of things, would be "castrated" and *ethicised* of its tiresome arbitrariness, and would then truly be in the service of concrete values and freedoms. As for God and Spirit, the *atheist* differs here, of course, in that he holds that God has even "lost himself" in human form — even in the

cross⁴⁸ — whilst the traditionalists hold nuanced positions that differ from the foregoing. Between that other *historical God* who is interwoven into everything and mutually unrealised (as both Barišić and Hegel would maintain, though I do not agree) we find, on the other hand, a *Kantian* and indeed an *Aristotelian* God who is independent and otherworldly in whatever form. If we set aside the question of the *power and the sword* of God and man alike in a struggle that is inevitable and active rather than passive, the “moral law” that is within us or within laws is not something we *construct*. And so for me Hegel is a point of departure within a certain panentheism, but equally a brief staging post. We save life and peace, I would argue, through laws. Barišić might agree with this and would not resist the idea, just as I would not resist his concept of the rule of law, equality, and common European unification under a law that is *beyond and above* the very legislator and the political interests or elites who create and enact it. But here again we have no guarantee of the “independence” and precise definition of *reason, power, consensus, or the interests* of those who shape values, nor of values as such. I regard all of this, however, as the

⁴⁸ **Jesus’** forgiveness on the cross is a kind of freedom of spirit or contempt for the world. His cry upon the cross is a sign of his (then) and our solitude from God Himself. But it is also a psalm and a symbolism and an obsession with the fulfilment of prophecy, and a conjunction of the finite and the infinite and the human element within him. God did not only “kill himself” but also death and our principles and nature, in that he was not, in my view, eternally God-man but “became incarnate” and permitted himself to die together with the human being (in body and in suffering), whilst his otherworldly and extratemporal component (in the Father or in himself) remains untouched. God thus created the illusion of death that was tangible and convincing even to Himself. But as virtual reality in which, unlike the Matrix, he cannot literally die forever. The paradox of his act and his (dual) nature is, in my view, the most logical explanation of the idea of “God among us” and of the killing of our “offence against the primordial” which is not only a physical event. However, Jesus’ call to participation in suffering, or in the practical and moral laws, would have had no meaning if he had stopped only at the cross, as many think: if he had died without resurrection, or had come down from the cross. Even the Bible says that everything would then have been meaningless. Coming down from the cross is something that everyone both does not want and yearns for. Because here is where not only the logic of the absurd collides, but Jesus would then not have been consistent — whilst people were late in knowledge even in his time.

necessary (I repeat: necessary, not anti-escapist) existence of *institutions* through laws, authority, and bureaucracy — but “contemplatively” or ontologically, this strikes me as a specialised but almost misguided expenditure of all reserves of strength on something that is a *means* and is not *a priori*. Laws, therefore, are not something we set up *a priori* to *good*, and are neither ends in themselves nor guarantors of life, happiness, or peace. We have had occasion to verify this.

This is why I was perhaps vehemently opposed to *capital punishment* in my degree thesis and at conferences — but for other, more human perspectives, not merely for the technical and juridical arguments of *prevention* and sanction. I, who am an advocate of *natural law* (whether in the tradition of **H. Grotius** or of more recent thinkers), part ways with even some conservative Hegelians on a subtle point, including in connection with “*the fallen nature*”. Whereas they view “the first” fall of man as a “happy fall” — an exit from blessed ignorance and a quasi-animal state of paradise, into the true knowledge and formation of identity, integrity, and values, and thus the advent of the magnificent Christ — I see things somewhat differently, and more idealistically. The problem is that we know neither what true values are nor do we possess genuine integrity. None of us do — and why? We *think* we possess and build it, just as I now believe, through intellectual effort and spiritual intuition (which has been important to many philosophers and believers alike), that I am defending great and “strong” theses. Not only that: like every human being, I think of myself as a *moral vertical*. The more self-critical I become, the more I wash my hands and wish to be a pure analyst. There lies the trap. The fruits of all of us moral verticals are — *conflicts, illnesses, deaths, and bitternesses* that descend sooner or later, even upon those who are not revolutionaries — which I have never been, and shall never be, since that is contrary to the conservative disposition. My late grandfather would have agreed with me here, though our dissidence would then have been labelled *non-progressive* and thus useless to every system. But I do not work for the system — I work for *the human being* as the fundamental unit, for the family, and only then would I move towards a broader ideal community, not the reverse. The

cunning of reason (List der Vernunft) is nothing other than the Spirit of God and God's law, which is stronger than the free laws of fallen beings. Harmony with it "pays off." This is my understanding of so-called dialectics. But the greatest half-deception is that the "good" and the democratic prevail — and that those who do not practise the tyranny by which they frequently introduce their "egalitarian laws". Good is a multiple concept. I refer here only to the "moral" good, not the technical good. All of this, even as a dialectically noble ideal, has never existed anywhere, and never will — or at least not for long. Europe "boasts" of having been without war for fifty years. That is a commendable record, certainly — but a negative one, not a positive.

If we take **Napoleon** as an example of a successful *ethical bureaucrat*, *meritocrat*, and introducer of great legal, civic, and intelligent *reforms*, we must nonetheless see — beyond those fruits (and, for instance, the Rue Marmont in Split, which remains a symbol of his intelligent and genuinely advanced administration) — that our autonomous communes (Poljica, my **Lokva Rogoznica**, and the city-states) were abolished⁴⁹. Although not

⁴⁹ What I in fact lost there — and what we lost with the abolition of those autonomous communes — was *the noble self-government* that had outlasted Venetians, Ottomans, Habsburgs, and even Italian and Yugoslav reconfigurations of the same coast. Between those powers we had always chosen, where we could, on three grounds: *Christianity*, and the *opportunism of as much freedom and as little taxation* as the moment of the moment allowed. Eight hundred years of survival was no accident, and it was no heroism either; it was a particular kind of practical wisdom that knew when to bow and when to keep its inner spirit upright. What is striking is that *only in peacetime* — only in this most recent stretch, after natural disasters, after the changes of states, after the collapse of agriculture and of the village as a form of life — did we *actually emigrate and begin to die out*. Wars we survived. The peace, as it turned out, scattered us. There are descendants of those communes in South America, in Australia, in the United States, and across northern Europe; but the tracing of the root grows thinner with each generation, and many no longer know where they came from at all.

I myself, like my grandfather before me, had to go out into the world from the time of the war onwards, for the ordinary reasons: a career, love, money, and the habit of looking outward that the village both fed and resented. My grandfather, when he chose Zagreb and philosophy, would say that he *did not wish to remain the only man in the village, and a*

immediately — rather, after a revolt with the Russians. But his life too ended on Saint Helena in defeat, and amid millions of dead. Who can know at the end of history whether it is a matter of inner spirit or of geopolitical and biological fortune that a community endures? Here I mean *physical survival*, leaving the moral and posthumous dimension for another theme — the one that interests me most, though I do not deny the necessity of labour in this world. I therefore reject the concentration of human effort on *cyclicity*, which others see as *customary order* but which has always been, more often than not, simply a “slogan” — particularly in law. Customs are real, but they are frequently a “grotesque excuse,” since the same “customs” have been violated and applied differently in both war and in peace.

narrow one; and they were, as is the way, both proud of him and jealous of him for it. We adapt, we southerners — culturally with relative ease, *but psychologically with more pain*, because the food, the climate, the very rhythm of the body are calibrated to other ground. We have at least the “peace” of the north in exchange. The northerner, by contrast, *cannot or will not adapt downwards* — the south is to him a stress, not a relief; he stays put, envies the south as a postcard, and does not in fact try, because he intuits, perhaps rightly, that what looks easy from the outside is physically punishing and economically without prospect, especially since the collapse of agriculture and of village community life.

And yet — and here Durkheim and his successors come back into view — *the suicide rate is higher in the north*, often among those who live in objectively good conditions and in their own house. I saw a strain of that toxicity even in my former wife's village, in its own quieter form. Why this is so I do not entirely know. My best guess is that they are *not aware that anything is missing* — that the sunlight is less, that the directness of human contact is less, that the body has fewer ways to release what accumulates in it — and that, lacking awareness, they also lack the means *to free the body and the spirit*. The peace and the indirectness of the north can be a slow killer where the war and the directness of the south, at least, leave you in no doubt where you stand. (I am, of course, also fortunate that the north does not always return blow for blow, and so I am both happy and unhappy in it, in a way that is hard to translate.) When I am on the sea, by contrast, I notice almost without effort that some of these mental burdens lighten of themselves, that the air itself is easier; *the north is in truth the harder place for the spirit*, even where it is the easier place for the body and the budget. That, too, is part of what the autonomous commune knew and what we forgot only when the commune itself was gone.

Although many agree that the human fall into knowledge was not pure *determinism*, some look to a redemptive escape into full freedom and form, whilst I look rather pessimistically on that process, since I see it as the beginning of the first breach of law (of trust, of life, of accusation, and so forth). And today there is only a heap of *sub-laws, lawlessness, and strange drives* hidden within us. Here I stand on **Luther's** side, though I do not deny human responsibility and *will*. I do hold, however, that we are fighting for **zero** — and at great cost. Not for a zero in this world and through some *political progression* that always delivers less than the general and individual crises do, but for a zero through *inner struggle and love* or *forgiveness* that return us to what we simply are — human. But even that result, even if it is perfect, is nothing other than a slightly *holier or more elevated zero* that awaits *death*. There is too much *suffering* in this world for it to “pay off,” even if we take into account that the Spirit saves and does not only punish, and never tortures people endlessly, and that the *theodicy of suffering* is itself either the direct or indirect wages of sin or else co-redemption in love. If I do not grieve for the freedom of those who choose sin and in fact punish themselves whilst merely “damaging” others, I do grieve for those who did not choose a fallen and sick nature, yet strive and struggle so hard around the most ordinary things — even if one day the fruits shall elevate all suffering. The saving of the human being or of society is a wondrous second human nature, yet it is confronted by a multitude of *fears, mortality, unpredictability, and the erosion and fading of memory*. When God said “You shall die,” He did not explain or show everything — but that is not to say it was a “deception” on His part, nor a diminishment of our freedom (nor perhaps its fullness) — but it was enough for it to be known as *truth*, and for it to be known that breach meant disappearance or a negative consequence for beings and deeds. Human beings, though they had not felt it, “knew” what a negative threat was, and were able to know the hierarchy and the order — the “normality” — of such a law. They could have studied it whilst enjoying peace and building a paradisiacal world.

We often look upon the first human beings as idiots — whether in Darwinian or in Judeo-biblical terms — and here I wish to offer a

counterweight. Human beings chose, rather, the fall and self-deification, from which the question was whether they would ever return — and they brought suffering even upon God Himself and “forced” Him into suffering. And now those same human beings — that is to say, we — are the ones who interpret morality. This is why, in my view, the beginning of humanity was **completed if not perfect** — in that it was not yet fully formed and integrated through contrast — but I think it went astray here as well. Fear is not something that disappears through law, and *the absence of war is not peace*. And the reverse. Of this I am a witness from the young nineteen-nineties.

After a multitude of written and unwritten, rigid and liberal divine and human *laws*, I hold that we circle in cyclicity around the means of agreement over fundamental justice and fundamental values, whilst forgetting the essential impossibility of changing the order of life — which, viewed in both atheistic and theistic philosophy today, is *realphilosophisch* a struggle for power and control over everything, including oneself, or simply a trade. In my view, therefore, laws are something that ought to explain being itself — what it is and how it functions — but our own discussion or attempt to “create laws” is an attempt to hold *disorder under control*, and that is in fact a kind of *philosophical infantilism*, albeit at least a concrete one, and one I commend. For while *individuality* is lost in everything, my individuality in turn could not exist without society, and my critique is not a negation of that current of Hegelianism. How would I write this book, and to whom, if there were no printing press, no peace, and so on? I do not flee from perspectives; I look at where our heart is directed. Whether that is the task of the politician, the jurist, the physician, or the philosopher is a question that is not now at issue. The civic “duty” of choice and voting must exist for everyone, but the work of practice and the work of theory or inner development rarely coincide. The most educated cadres both can and need not bring a breath of fresh air to policies. This is why I do not agree with **Hannah Arendt** entirely. The human being is often simply an individual who wants to get “out of the birth canal or back into it,” I would say, and everything else is an instrument of the vision of how to get there.

The philosopher, the theologian, the deep psychologist, and the empiricist must see *what stands behind the visible* — even if that is speculation or medicine. Because *love, death, and injustice are not speculation* but the urgent and never-resolved crown of questions around which revolves a heap of *trivialities* that are transient and material to such a degree that ever more people simply stop following any daily politics (and do not even hate it). Therefore: if **injustice** exists, the problem is not in the *law* (whether coercive or *reasonably constructive and consensual*) but in the *disorder of the very concept of justice or equality in the rational or spiritual sense*. It does not even matter whether our psychology is personal, familial, or **Le Bonian**. Once it is disordered, it cannot be legally corrected in the individual. That is like extinguishing a flame but not the embers. The law can hold it under control through prevention and save other people's rights, but *law is ontologically superfluous in itself* because it speaks of something that — *is*. And what *is* has no definition and in fact no negation, I would say in my own terms. Therefore: the negation of family harmony is not — quarrel. Quarrel is a distorted perfidy and something that has entirely different characteristics — it is not an *antonym or antipode*. The devil too is not the antipode of God or of the human being. I would not even enter into the discussion of *privation of the good*. The problem is rather in the concepts that people frequently set up as their mission and their holy grail. While I err often in formal concepts, today the problem lies in *their substantial aspect*. Not only do people fail to know socio-political concepts in every dimension — but consider one more banal example: *what is the opposite of chastity?* Most people would answer: *lust*. A more precise answer is *gluttony*. And the entire course of resolution then swerves in the wrong direction. Even if both concepts are correct, and one is simply slightly more precise, we must functionally divide. One “philosopher” and believer will address the question of *lust*, and another the question of *gluttony*. That is not bad, but in isolation from one another, it is not only insufficient — it may be incomplete and misleading.

My co-creatorship and co-salvation through **fundamental soteriology and eschatology** is neither exclusively *otherworldly* nor exclusively *this-*

worldly — it is both. But it depends upon God who realises Himself through us — for our sake, yet *independent of us*. All the laws we discover or create — already exist. It is as though a person breathes air whilst another chokes, and the one who breathes (doing so only barely, or with a rattle) says to the other: “This is air — it must be breathed with the diaphragm, like this — ah.” Whilst we think about laws, we have already broken them and shifted the balance of power and now wish to correct it or return power to our own hands. A labourer once said to me long ago: “If people could simply agree, your profession would not even exist — do not take offence.” I took none. In my own legal disputes, I rely on legal knowledge or professional legal assistance the least — except when bureaucracy (il)logically requires it. In my view, my “philosophy” is a combination of **Heidegger’s** deep Observation of being and his disenchantment with politics (whatever that disenchantment may have been) and my own ontological “de-throning” of technocracy, but with the crucial addition that I subsequently eliminate *time* as his horizon and the hallowed wall of life. The male is, in fact, the most responsible for order — so that even *feminism and misogyny* are a secondary point here. Of course, the woman too has a full — and sometimes a more successful — metaphysical capacity to realise the salvation of the life and dignity of every human being. And the woman, after all, is mother, and the object of love and sexual desire or longing, and here our story begins through — love.

Love in every sense of the word is the sole overarching motive (not merely a law) to which all resolutions attach naturally. I write for no other reason than love. The motive of love is present even in all those who have any kind of *action*, only the question is whether love towards the human being and love of love itself is the priority, or merely something secondary.

No one says: “Today I did not quarrel,” unless the struggle is within him. No one says: “Today I did not forge a cheque,” unless he did not even know such a thing existed. If we write that law for others who do not know they must not do so, or who pretend, then we are automatically only in a repressive and inferior position in which we neither build ourselves nor

others to any real degree, and society very little. While we solve problems — love, life, and being are passing by. This is why Hegel has made a *perversion* of both God and the human being. While people now think that I am playing the “creator of being” and the sage, he does this in a perfidiously abstract and statist way. God may exist in the state and in nature (democratic, theocratic, or some third kind) — but God “does not walk in the state” as they suppose. Those are false theses. I am an optimist and a pessimist, this-worldly and other-worldly, but my other-worldliness is a metaphysical longing for absolute depth and meaning — which we have lost — and not for abstract ideas, nor even for the “misuse” of the concept of God and morality in order to build a material, transient, and perishable state of any kind in the world.

Furthermore, Hegel is no longer taken — as he should be — as a means of transcending conflict through peaceable educational processes and *opposing or complementary truths* (which are not always peaceable, as we see). Instead he is taken as the *foundation and proof of struggle* — and even as a *command to struggle*. It is as though we see fire burning in the grate and say: “Let us add another fire, so that their cumulative effect may purify the grate and the fire to completion.” Whatever survives — that is the good. A kind of state utopia was seen by **Thomas More** in the commune of Poljica — but even that was not quite as it appeared, and More’s *Utopia* itself is not only a fairy tale but one that wrestles with questions of “dirty jobs” and contradictions. Here I therefore “drop out of the Hegelian game” to which everyone appeals — even though he introduced more practically “generally-felt” novelties and fewer postulates, which is perhaps commendable. Yet this is precisely why I go to the *postulate* — backwards. In order to fill the *cracks in the crises of the system* with the “depth” of Observation and love, for as long as I have strength — because I do not accept the idea of a *dead human being*.

What human beings, philosophers, and politicians achieve with remarkable success is the *diminishment of God and of the human being*, and their placement in the mould of community or non-community, instead

of looking at the human being as an individual — bound to other beings and to God Himself — in *breadth, height, and depth*: from below. Our gaze and our longing must reach upwards — but not our action. Our activity is nothing other than a constant looking at the floor and straight ahead, whilst above us the starry sky makes its immensity. Even when we travel by rocket or build a “Tower of Babel” to the Moon, we look then too — only straight ahead. Our pinnacle is to plant a flag on the Moon, rather than to look and marvel at the view from the Moon towards the Earth, and further, towards the sky.

Instead of raising everything from below upwards (in a non-totalitarian, non-despairing, yet not excessively this-worldly-idealist way), human beings — and Hegelians with them — *compress* and bring everything downwards, ostensibly in the name of breadth and the future. Here even Christology, which speaks for itself regarding the nature of the God-man, is no longer relevant — for the human being has truly managed to reduce the Gospel (whether authentic or apocryphal) to this: that *we interpret God’s words more than God Himself, and in His very name*. This is why Christ’s words, to this day, are more convincing than hundreds of our own elaborations. **Childhood innocence** (or the joy of life, even through suffering and impatience and impudence) is the Christological ideal towards which we strive, and yet further still — and paradoxically, we possessed it and had it here, on this earth! Both in Eden and in childhood! The greatest philosopher is neither the sage nor the childishly primitive person. The greatest philosopher is the person of knowledge (which is in reality relative and modest), together with that *natural intelligence and reason and childlike courage* whereby in others we see only — *life, love, and event, or being* — rather than spending entire days occupied with oneself and the analysis of (im)perfect systems. That may be good for a salary, entertainment, reputation, and a few euros more for everyone, and perhaps even for a people. But it is nothing on nothing, because we do not know how to spend our lives properly, let alone our money. The paradox is that want often makes us *soberer, more alert, and happier, or more modest*.

But that reality which we see in our own needs (which are excessive) is not Hegel's invention — it is perhaps precisely the opposite of him.

Here I must take the side of **the philosophy of the „heart“ of Max Scheler or Blaise Pascal**, and not of formalism, revolutions, or the further study of **radical evils, privations, „the laws of the stronger“**, and so on. Whilst I appear to be a *pessimist beneath a mask* — this is precisely Hegel. But he wishes to transform the relativities and the miseries into some proof of a great destiny that is not negative inertia but, in his view, positive. And while he is the driver of reason in Europe, I see in him only an additional abstraction which, with good intentions, sought to reconcile irreconcilable worlds. The New Jerusalem will never be “literally here.” Whereas the true pessimist **Schopenhauer** would call him, for all of this and other reasons, a “scribbler,” I would agree — but alongside Schopenhauer I would add classical *Christian ontologism and mysticism* (not fanaticism and fantasy) in place of his Buddhism. I would even call myself a “**Christian Nietzsche**” — preferring to side with contradiction (as also proof of society's problem) rather than be a hypocrite and a “discoverer of laws.”

The greatest happiness is if someone is at least theoretically and practically *consistent*. This is even a problem in my grandfather's books, particularly the last one. For he confusedly mixes *critique and apologia of capitalism and socialism and of atheism, Catholicism, and Protestantism* alike. Although my inner law is proof that the outer law makes sense (but ought to be superfluous in a true world), philosophers such as *Aquinas or Barišić* would connect precisely these threads; but I hold that any engagement with the effort to create a law in order to control “wild ones worse than ourselves” (and it is never known whether the people or their leaders are the more wild) is, philosophically, often a life's failure and a dead end — this ought to be the preserve of purely security-political options, not of philosophy, since the aim of the philosopher, theologian, or even psychologist is *to change both our own and another's consciousness and to ensure that the law is not broken at all, but that the overarching meaning of being and love is accepted first*. Each of us tends towards the

absolute, and this is human, because otherwise we would fall apart within ourselves. But whilst we wish to educate children through school curricula, children must be raised in the family, and in themselves, or through the grace of the Spirit (of God and their own will — but as *independent components in synergy*). And the *family* is in crisis for a host of reasons and variables of which I am myself a witness. If the European and Divine Spirit is “enlightened progress,” yet is soaked in blood, discord, inquisitions, colonialism, camps, and inflations within just the last fifty years or so, with consolation further off than the term of one’s own death — then poor is our mother and the problem is not even in individuals and corruption.

Where others see *Spirit*, I see at most *Providence*; where others see *reason*, I see *technical or ontological logic*, together with *the pessimistic realism of this world and the optimistic realism of the totality of life and of individuals*. And this cannot be realised through law. This is why, from my own faculty, this book contains a mere two and a half pages of text.

Today, *dissociativity* is the greatest problem — in the young age as in the old — but through mutual long-term love, the individual must be aware that solitude too is only an *illusion of the ego and of fear, and a habit*. Consciousness and conscience are therefore both acquired and received through **love and respect from oneself and from others, the acknowledgement of one’s own lies, the “cleansing” of the ego, and external grace** (the educational and social initial conditions are here only one cog in the wheel). We must be aware that our consciousness genuinely often lags behind our decisions and actions, but that inner spiritual progress exists. However, in my view this progress is on an individual basis (*I–God–those closest to me and my ideals*) that expands into society — and it is not society that is the instrument or creator of either our spirit or of God’s.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This is also a new confusion, like the film *Heretic*, which emphasises precisely this educational rigidity of cultural and religious younger generations. People frequently confuse causality, hierarchy, and the depth of truth or truths. If you play chess, you will always think only within the rules of chess. The question is why you play it and what it brings to the human being as such — and what matters more than chess. This does not mean not playing chess, nor playing it all night as I once did and ending up in hospital —

Resistance is a challenge and an opportunity for good, not a presupposition of (greater) good, in my view. Here I part from Hegel and take him only for individual or partially social reflections, whilst I hold that his “hallucination” at the level of the algorithm arises because he wishes, *through a subjective path, to arrive at objective law and objective idealism*. He seeks to formalise and introduce into education the experience and intuition of the “prevailing of good” across history, instead of simply opening the window of the “law of the heart” as something that remains worthy of admiration and study. If his intention is a “law of the heart” and not a law of society, and if children will (ever) understand teaching as a matter of formation, then that is a good idea.

If we bring Hegel closer to **S. Žižek** or the late **M. Schwartz** (who, with good intentions, sought to revitalise an independent and firm God through **Anselm** — though Anselm had already been contested and was then forcibly reinstated by Kant) — then we have a modern example of the collision of two radical and different Hegelian sides around the same problem of the unfreedom of the individual. We recognise a *stalemate*, or again a similar game that repeats itself, and here is that *parallax* (*Paralexe*) and the return to *radicalisms* (Schwartz even told me personally, a few years before his death, whilst wandering bewilderedly among the squares and pastry shops, that his street would not bear his and Lavoslav’s surname but that his own name and surname would give its name to the whole square). Hegel was therefore cited by both *totalitarians and democrats*, and he himself defended “good ideas” that floated on poor individual and social

but in the choice between lower and higher things, one must always choose the higher. And this must be done even at the cost of the “incomprehensible” for the world. The only minimum is to preserve one’s health while one still has something “to say and to do” in this world, since it is here that the relationships for both worlds are built. Were that mission not present, the abandonment of health or that “passive suicide” would make sense. But our relationships are in fact inexhaustible. Am I fulfilled even without this book, and even if I do not live to see it published — can my being and my work be “useful,” saved, and continued even if I no longer influence things as a living and at least partially healthy person? Yes.

foundations — to the point where people on television were literally laughing at his ideas and at the return of capital punishment and a firm hand. The question is how Hegel himself would have looked upon how the modernists later interpreted him. Both of those mentioned, for instance, cited Jesus — who brought “a sword as well as peace” — but from quite different angles. On the one hand, both are, in my view, not only “stars” or interesting non-traditional leftists and rightists, but genuinely good intellectuals and critics of the existing order who direct their activity towards a humanistic goal — the liberation of the self, of the spirit, of the nation, of the world, of all of us who are passive, and so forth. They are in fact allies from opposing sides. They are highly perceptive when they say: Jesus’ “non-resistance” is itself a kind of “revolution,” and his *passion* is, to paraphrase, *the greatest form of will* — but it was not always passion throughout his public life, and things are always taken out of context, not only from the New Testament but from all the Covenant texts.

Slavoj Žižek occupies a position in this conversation that I find both illuminating and ultimately insufficient. He is, in the most precise sense, a *new Sartre*: someone who uses Hegelian dialectics, Lacanian psychoanalysis, logotherapy-adjacent thinking, biological determinism and the relativity of every symbolic system — instruments nearly identical to mine. The conclusions diverge sharply.

For Žižek, following Freud and Lacan, the **death drive** (*Todestrieb*) is not merely a wish for annihilation but something constitutive: it lives *through* us, embodied in life itself. In *The Parallax View* (2006) — his self-described magnum opus — he argues that reality itself is the interplay between two incompatible perspectives with no neutral ground between them. The gap *is* the truth; it cannot be resolved, only inhabited. Where Sartre saw the crack in being as freedom, Žižek sees it as *constitutive lack* — a gap that ideology perpetually exploits because the subject perpetually tries and fails to close it.

I recognise this diagnosis. The detection — that all human systems, including language, consciousness and moral order, are structurally

paradoxical and self-undermining — is precisely what I too arrived at, after months of research. We meet at the same problem. The crack is real. The paradox of language and symbolism is real. The biological and neurological underpinning of what we call meaning is real and cannot be waved away by invoking spirit alone. In this, Žižek is, frankly, right — and his brilliance as a diagnostician exceeds that of many who share my conclusions.

Where we part ways is at the **conclusion**. Žižek remains a philosopher of the gap — he deepens and sophisticates the diagnosis without offering a way through it that does not circle back to the same structural impasse. He is, in my reading, a diagnostic genius who has no prescription. And in a book about suicidality — about people standing at the edge — a diagnosis without a way through is not enough. To use the formula of this book: high I -quality, but low σ . The information is dense and precise, but the channel is not open to the Bridge. He and I used the same instruments. We did not arrive at the same destination. That gap itself — between our shared diagnosis and our divergent conclusions — is the n factor in action.

We have also a second current, such as the opposite convert-theologian **Porobija**, who in everything seeks temporal and logical contradictions and so on. He, contrary to my convictions, repeats a similar critique: Hegel comprehends everything as *substantial totality and infinity*. And that is simply the “smuggling” of the unprovable and of the divine into the domain of impressive logic and the state apparatus. That this is a weak ontological proof of (such a) God is something that, as a theist, suits me as an argument alongside such an atheist, and in my defence. Here philosophy is at its most dangerous but also at its finest. St. **Paul** is a convert in the opposite direction, frequently criticised by **Nietzsche**, and I in turn see in Nietzsche a great Christian without Christ (and not the Antichrist). **Hitler** sees in him the “Superman” and again extracts only what suits him. From **Kant** I take the postulate — though my legs are unsteady, my conviction is strong — whilst rejecting his “principle,” his prejudices concerning races or illegitimate children, his view of capital punishment as a necessary retribution, and so forth. Therefore the same thinkers are for us both a lever and a stone in the

shoe, and the opposing camp is sometimes similar to us. One must be careful here. **G.F. Hegel**, in my abolitionist master's thesis and published article on this topic, viewed capital punishment too as something that "eliminates" evil; **J. Bentham** saw it as a benefit for all; **Calvin** as a Christian was equally too severe — so the nuances are infinite. Furthermore, I speak against swearing yet I swear; I speak against depression yet I am depressed. Digging is not easy — but my **syncretism** in the end remains: myself and a handful of authors as the bare thesis. And that thesis is woven from many different strands.

But if the true (eternal) death of Jesus is real, what kind of affirmation of freedom and spirit is that, they ask? The freedom of the spirit is not the "control" of a higher Boss but is the ultimate proof that the Boss is, in that respect, an equal but existing subject who grants us *maximum freedom and maximum determinedness*. This is my view. In fact, it shows that death is not eternal where consciousness is concerned, but only in terms of the quality and life of a *spiritual existence*. Jesus did not die sooner than us or with a three-day expiry date, and so on. Rather, his "today, or tomorrow, or in three days, in paradise or for an indeterminate period" is simply an indicator that *death is a dimensional and moral reality* more than a place of *magic, of queuing and waiting, or of complete disappearance*. I cannot escape the impression that philosophers hold Jesus' work in such respect that it remains strange to me — how they wish to have *Christianity without Christ or without the fullness* of his revelation and promise. Few people are genuinely anti-Christ.

Whilst **Žižek** would see here, I suggest, the eternal analysis and confirmation of the *selfishness* of the system and of the human being — but some ideal that is so close and yet so far — and would therefore advocate a humanism "without aggression and bureaucracy". Schwartz, on the other hand, would press in that direction so far as to reach the radical right wing of Hegelianism and become everything that Jesus was not — and would introduce once again a new bureaucracy which he himself hates, and which Hegel paradoxically introduced into Europe (whether or not that was his

intention, and whether or not he was simply unrealistic). Meanwhile, Franz Kafka dismantled it to the very end. However, **Žižek** is more precise when he sees that this “sword” means a *cut* and not a literal sword, and I find him philosophically rather more attractive here, even though he is to the left of me. Schwartz’s sword is the concrete authority of God, whose subjects and betrayers we — his people — now wish to introduce by force and immediately, to prove to ourselves, to God, and to everyone else that we acknowledge that “law.” Furthermore, this “sword” also presages resistance and aggression among other people who are not fellow-travellers of the Christian new doctrine.

And in truth the essence of the doctrine, and of my own *eclecticism* or *Lacanianism*, is not *dissidence* through “resistance, subversion, critique, or self-importance” but precisely the attempt at *rising above* that point where others too have apparently risen but at that altitude we no longer agree.⁵¹

The tension between *drive and ethics* has always been so strong that one never knows what the initial position of the human being is. And it is precisely for this reason that no economic order or earthly welfare is ever achieved. A neighbour says to me: “If you are healthy, you can live off potatoes — and if you are not, a million is not enough today.” Then people have taken something as perishable as health as their idol: “Oh, Father, as long as there is health.” Health of what kind? Who, in this world, does evil

⁵¹ One often sees that pessimism and real fear at both poles, and a fear of the collapse or non-realisation of old and new systems; and we can see that capitalism itself is saved and endures precisely through human egoism and the mercantile nature, and is similarly both opposite and akin to Christianity and **Hegelianism**. All (the Marxists) predicted its collapse at its height. This “not hoarding of treasure” and “being in this world but not of it” is a kind of compromise long known in Catholicism, but it seems too “poor” and hypocritical. And so my grandfather went to find proof in Protestantism as the crowning instance of secular economic and spiritual rationality and prosperity, and a reconciliation of the two worlds. I would not go that far in that direction. This is why, besides Schumpeter, I prefer his early period of work with Mannheim, who too left many questions unresolved, and who also had a good political sociology. The socialist sociologists enriched but also divided my grandfather within himself, and his corpus became even unclear, though it was scientifically of quality and with an emphasis on the neutrality of research.

— the physically ill? Jesus’ final aim was not to create a “third way” or even a middle current, and yet neither to be in conflict with authority, with the Old Testament, with the Laws, and with the matter of life. Rather, he saw that every human personality of the individual and of society is fragile, so that we to this day do not know whether *evil is the absence of good* or whether *good is the absence of evil*. Nor do we know what evil even is. A “political or dead Jesus” would be an example of absurdity, not of liberation. Liberation would be only principled and perhaps spiritual — but neither physical nor of the soul — if Jesus had lied in anything; for that would lead towards pure **Camus** and a life that is defiance against itself and against death. One always extracts from the context only one side and one interpretation of Jesus: “I came to judge... I did not come to judge... hell lasts forever or it does not... the Eucharist is memorial or presence... all will be saved or many... Peter is the successor or he is not... Paul distorted Jesus’ word or he did not... the apocrypha are provocation or truth and contradiction... Judas was called, used, or wished to participate in the apostolate... witnesses and dogmas are questionable though logical...” All of this diverts from the idea that Jesus — as he himself claims — is truth in himself: that he is a concrete and not merely an ideal liberator and omniscient teacher, whilst his ideas and teaching are only “auxiliary sciences and instructions.”

I, by contrast — from the foundations of classical Christianity — take from the other ideas and “secrets” in order to re-examine both my own and another’s position, guided first by the experience of my own intuition, lived encounters, and the resolution of life’s problems. Society is only a *contract*, *an elite*, or a *final by-product* — not a source for reflection and change. This is as though one were to make a shoe from many different kinds of leather and glue it together barely and by chance, then say: “Here is a shoe — let us study and refine it.” Yet meanwhile one piece of leather has already gone mouldy, another is synthetic, a third is a different colour or smells off, the size does not fit our foot, and the sole is unsuitable. How can an engine be ideal if the fuel is bad, and vice versa? Who is the greater, in the end of history — the (progressive) pupil or the (old) teacher?

Žižek is equally no great fan of Buddhism, and Jesus himself is neither a “self-care hype,” nor a social anti-Roman revolutionary, nor a Zionist in the modern sense of the word. The desire for the freedom of *one’s own spirit* is precisely what is central to all of them — for without the individual there is no society, though perhaps the reverse holds as well. Whilst Žižek and Hegel seek a “monarch” in this world, I hold that our monarch is exclusively our spirit (with a lowercase “s”) and the revealed and *accomplished Spirit* that “reinforces” fall or salvation but does not change either the law or the substance. We think we have increased the power of the river by introducing dams, power stations, or new channels. Whilst Žižek interestingly holds that it is better to have a bureaucracy that is cold, dull, and alienated than to have the beautification or radicalisation of reality and the identification of friends or enemies through totalitarianism — I hold that the problem, in our *psychological* sense, is often the greatest. For we are beings who *resist resistance*. **Viktor E. Frankl**, whom I cite above, had his greatest problems and his greatest challenges *after* the liberation of the camp. There he saw the hypocrisy and vindictiveness of his fellow prisoners, the grief over the death of his wife — who had been, mercifully, a sustaining hope through the hardest days, even if that hope proved in the end unfounded — an unempathetic society with no ready solution, and above all a sense of survivor’s guilt — or else the habit of communal life as it had been in the camp. These are not so-called Stockholm syndromes or proof of dependence on society: they are the fragility of the individual mind. What saved him was the idea of finishing his book. Of course, this meant the hope — which was realised — that he would once again be socially active in an old or new place. But that was not his motive, I would say. His motive, like mine, is *personal*. I shall finish the book even if no one reads it. I want to be noticed — I do not lie about that — but being noticed (which is the foundation of my later conclusions on ontology) is not the same as being part of society, accepted, praised, or successful, since those are relative components. That is the drug of modern society, with all its consequences. I was never more moved by a positive — I stress: positive, not only negative — review of my works or films. Because the value of life

and of the human being has no further connection to technical successes. I would wager that Heidegger would consent to being erased from history if only people would pause for a moment before being. Bingo!

Whilst some advocate “direct democracy” as the solution to these uncertainties, Žižek himself sees in it a new danger of (digital) bureaucracy. Where is the *synthesis*? Where is the synthesis of humanity and digitality in our time? He in fact opposes even the idea of my grandfather’s mentor **Bottomore** — and similar currents — that one must participate from below (in a civic and working-class sense) in order to control and exert pressure on (new) elites; but he advocates a permanent “state of exception” through infrastructure. That infrastructure, however, I can see today is in a greater crisis than the people it serves. Take only the European Union and artificial intelligence as an example. This drives every left and right Hegelian to distraction — and this is why I raise my hands here: hands that are not surrender but a necessary attempt to find a new way out. An interesting idea of Žižek’s, since we are on the subject, is that our private life *remains untouched* if bureaucracy merely sends us a tax notice. But my private life — on account of a wrongly filed tax return — is equally disrupted. It is disrupted because of my fear, ignorance, trauma, or arrogance, it is true — but the fact that I am “only human” is something from which I cannot escape. Today everything has become a competition of who will survive longer — the human being or the bureaucracies. I have already lived through dozens of collapses of bureaucracies and of people, whilst I myself have remained. Now I simply have an existential fear that some form of collapse is what awaits me and my generation. Those younger than me are most horrified when I tell them that our youth is passing and that it was the strongest card in the game — stronger even than all this knowledge and these successes. My social phobia grows with the years and with knowledge, which is paradoxical. Also, Heidegger is more anthropocentric than me in epistemology and ontology and is narrowing the Being.

„WE“ DISSIDENTS – MARUŠIĆ (A.)/MARUŠIĆ (B.)/FRANKL

Marušić and Marušić, Viktor Frankl — on figures who exceed their categories and why that matters

How many football matches must one play to prove that the world exists outside the stadium?

I. THE LANDSCAPE: WHO IS SAYING WHAT, AND TO WHOM

Contemporary academic philosophy is not one thing. It is, more precisely, three things that barely speak to each other. According to cross-disciplinary surveys confirmed in broad outline by the PhilPapers 2020 data, the rough distribution of professional philosophers runs as follows: roughly fifty percent identify with a broadly functionalist or physicalist orientation, treating the question of being as, at bottom, a question about matter, neurological states, and evolutionary function. A further thirty percent hold to the classical humanist tradition — Sartre, Heidegger, Marcel, the phenomenological inheritance — in which being is first and foremost a human drama, and consciousness the irreducible centre of any serious ontology. The remaining fifteen to twenty percent, growing fastest in numbers if not yet in institutional prestige, are those who might be called the new metaphysicians: philosophers drawing on quantum cosmology, biocentric models, or speculative realism, who hold that being exceeds human consciousness without reducing to mere physics.

In Croatia, the distribution tilts toward the humanist and phenomenological inheritance. Heidegger and Sartre remain obligatory reading on university syllabuses; the tradition is alive. But the same fault lines run through Zagreb and Split as through Paris or Berlin: the physicalists think the humanists are trafficking in literary mysticism; the humanists think the physicalists have lost the soul of the question; and the new

metaphysicians are regarded by both with the particular suspicion reserved for those who cannot be easily placed.

These three blocs do not often produce synthesis. They produce parallel monologues, each conducted in its own idiom, with its own journals and settled assumptions about which questions are worth asking. This book is written from inside that impasse — not as a neutral observer, but as someone who has spent a good part of his intellectual life being unintelligible to all three camps simultaneously. That is not a boast. It is a position, and it carries both an advantage and a cost.

The question of **free will** is perhaps the most honest battleground in this book, because it is where both sides fight with the same weapons and neither can claim a clean victory. On one side: the argument that consciousness, co-responsibility, and the space for God and meaning are not eliminable without destroying the very instrument we use to argue against them. On the other: the universe apparently without first cause, natural explanations for apparent miracles, anthropocentrism at its zenith yet in acute crisis precisely because of that zenith, and the measuring instrument that can be non-living — though the question of who or what created it remains unanswered. Heisenberg noted that the act of observation changes what is observed. This cuts both ways: it supports neither pure materialism nor naive theism.

Quantum physics deserves specific mention precisely because both sides have tried to appropriate it. The sceptic uses quantum indeterminacy to argue against classical causation and therefore against a first cause. The believer uses it to argue that the universe is not the closed, deterministic machine that eliminates the possibility of transcendent intervention. Both are correct as analogies and both are wrong as proofs. Quantum effects do not scale to the macro world in any straightforward way. *What quantum physics does show* is that the universe at its most fundamental level resists the kind of clean causal story that would settle this debate in either direction. The analogy I have used throughout this book — syntropy and entropy as physical scaffolding for spiritual dynamics — is epistemically no

weaker and no stronger than the quantum analogies deployed on the other side. We are all, in this respect, working with scaffolding, not with the building itself.

Scientists who affirm God — from **Francis Collins** to **Heisenberg** himself — and those who deny him — from **Hawking** to **Dawkins** — work from the same empirical data. This is not an accident. It is evidence that the question of a supreme plan versus supreme chaos cannot be settled from within the universe. Neither side has witnesses from outside. What remains is intuition, experience, and the decision we make about what kind of being we choose to be. Consciousness and faith are, in this sense, the most personal and least delegable of all human acts. This is not evasion. It is the only honest description of where we actually stand.

II. FRANKL: THE „NEGLECTED“ PROFESSIONAL

Viktor Frankl is perhaps the clearest case in the twentieth century of a thinker who fell through every available category — and who fell through them not despite his credentials but because of what he did with them. He completed a doctorate in medicine and, later, a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Vienna in 1948. He was a trained psychiatrist who built a clinical method — logotherapy — that is still practised and still producing measurable results in oncology units, palliative care, addiction treatment, and correctional facilities. He was not an outsider speculating from the margins. He was a credentialed professional who turned his profession inside out — which is precisely why the profession could not easily dismiss him and could not comfortably embrace him either.

His philosophical debts are substantial and openly acknowledged. From **Max Scheler** he took the idea that values are not projections of human desire but real structures of the world that we *discover* rather than invent. From **Heidegger** he took the concept of being-in-the-world and the fundamental existential of care — but refused Heidegger's conclusion: where Heidegger sees anxiety before death as the horizon that reveals

authentic existence, Frankl sees in precisely that anxiety the signal of a meaning not yet realised. From **Jaspers** he took the *Grenzsituation* — the boundary situation of death, suffering, guilt, and struggle — as the place where the human being is most radically thrown back upon itself and most genuinely capable of self-transcendence. From **Pascal** he drew the conviction that the heart has its reasons which reason does not know — that intuition is not the enemy of precision but one of its deepest forms.

Frankl's doctoral thesis in philosophy, *Der unbewusste Gott* (*The Unconscious God*, 1948), argued that every human being carries an unconscious religiosity — not a commitment to any institutional church, but a structural orientation toward something that transcends the self. He distinguishes the search for *meaning* from the search for *God*: the former is available to atheists and believers alike — his deliberate scientific neutrality. This allowed him to claim, against Freud, that the unconscious is not merely a warehouse of suppressed drives but carries a *noetic* — spiritual — dimension that is equally real and equally capable of pathology when neglected. In this he was not departing from science; he was insisting on its incompleteness.

That pathology he named the *noogenic neurosis*: the illness that comes not from repressed desire but from repressed meaning — from the *existential vacuum* of a life that has ceased to ask what it is for. This names something the dominant psychiatric paradigm — with its hormones, its tablets, and its scanning of brains — does not have a category for. You can, Frankl argued, have a perfectly functioning neurochemistry and still be dying of meaninglessness. The psychiatrist who does not know this is not wrong about what the tablets do; he is simply treating a symptom while the condition deepens.

Why, then, is Frankl so rarely cited in serious ontological discussions? The answer is threefold. First: he became popular — and academic philosophy and psychiatry share a prejudice against authors who appear on airport bookshop shelves, where comprehensibility is taken as evidence of insufficient rigour. Second: he used the word *spiritual* in a clinical paper,

which the majority of functional materialists read as religion smuggled through the back door. Third, and most uncomfortably: he imposed responsibility. In a climate that has largely made peace with moral relativism, Frankl's insistence that life poses genuine questions to which there are genuine answers — and that the human being is accountable for the quality of its response — is not merely provocative. It is felt as an accusation.

The result is a figure simultaneously a bestseller and an intellectual orphan: too spiritual for the doctors, too grounded for the philosophers, too demanding for a culture that has learned to treat meaning as a lifestyle choice. He demonstrated that the highest questions of being are, in fact, the most practical questions of survival. That is a synthesis the system does not know how to process — not because it is wrong, but because processing it would require the system to change.

III. MARUŠIĆ AND MARUŠIĆ: ONE QUESTION, TWO ROUTES

My grandfather, **Ante Marušić**, studied and graduated in philosophy before completing his doctorate in the sociology of knowledge. His intellectual formation was classical: trained in the tradition and conversant with the debates of his time, he engaged — not only through texts but through personal encounters and lasting disputes — with figures in the orbit of **Karl Mannheim**, **Heidegger**, and **Schumpeter**. He was present at the confrontation between **Schluck** and **Volkmann** — a moment in mid-twentieth-century German philosophy that serves elsewhere in this book as an illustration of what happens when two equally serious intellects are prevented from reaching synthesis by the human failings that accompany even the most rigorous philosophical temperament. The intervention that finally broke the deadlock was not the most powerful argument in the room; it was the quiet authority of a peripheral figure whose calm created the space neither combatant could create for himself.

My grandfather was drawn throughout his career to what he called a *supra-truth* — a position above the competing orthodoxies of the day that would offer not a Hegelian synthesis, which dissolves both terms into a third, but a *higher vantage point* from which the partial truths of each position could be seen as partial. This drew him, periodically, into what I would now call sub-philosophy: the attempt to anchor the universal in the technical and the sociological, to demonstrate the validity of philosophical intuitions through data and method. This is where both of us have sometimes lost the thread. The attempt to make philosophy competitive with empirical sciences on their own terms tends to produce not a richer philosophy but a thinner sociology. He fled toward the sociology of knowledge — and I suspect he could not fully escape his own philosophical origins, which is precisely why he remained most alive in the sociological precisely where it pressed against the philosophical.

My own formation is less classical and more accidental — shaped more directly by what happened than by what was intended. I studied philosophy in secondary school and passed the university entrance examination in it. I completed a degree in law — the daughter of philosophy, trained in the application of general principles to particular cases under conditions of genuine uncertainty — and later moved into film and interdisciplinary research. Psychology and psychiatry were not disciplines I chose; they chose me, arriving through the specific texture of a family whose hundred-year arc encompasses war, displacement, institutional crisis, and the kind of intellectual ambition that refuses domestication by any single field. Having lived that reality, I found myself not escaping toward philosophy and theology but *returning* to them — precisely the direction my grandfather had moved away from when he settled into the sociology of knowledge. The circle closed, but from the opposite side.

What we share is not a pedigree in the formal sense — he has the doctorate in philosophy and in the sociology of knowledge; I have the law degree and a body of work in legal scholarship, film, music, and historical research. What we share is something more structural: the refusal to

remain inside any single disciplinary enclosure, and the persistent sense that the most serious questions can only be approached from multiple angles simultaneously. Neither of us arrived at the centre of any one field. Both of us, I believe, have arrived at something the centre of each field cannot quite see from where it stands.

IV. HEIDEGGER, SARTRE, AND THE QUESTION THAT REFUSES TO STAY PUT

The Heidegger-Sartre dispute is relevant here not as intellectual history but as a live methodological question. Heidegger's charge against Sartre — delivered in the 1946 *Letter on Humanism* — was that Sartre had simply inverted the old metaphysics: instead of God creating man, man creates himself, but the structure of the claim remained unchanged. Sartre, Heidegger argued, was still trapped inside the *Dasein*-as-subject, unable to think Being as such rather than beings in their relation to human consciousness. For Heidegger, the human being is not the measure of being but its *shepherd* — the entity through whom being can announce itself, but not the source of being's meaning.

Both positions remain live options. Those who follow Sartre remain focused on freedom, responsibility, and the ineliminable weight of consciousness. Those who follow Heidegger toward the question of Being itself tend toward an ontological austerity that can, in practice, produce a philosophy as remote from actual human suffering as the most abstract analytic theory. Both struggle with the same problem: how to be rigorously precise about what matters without losing contact with what actually happens to people.

Frankl's response was not theoretical but practical. He treated the question of Being as inseparable from the question of what keeps a human being alive under conditions that make life apparently not worth living. Where Heidegger sees anxiety before death as the revelation of authentic existence, Frankl sees in that same anxiety the *signal of unrealised potential*

— not that existence is groundless but that it is calling for a response. Where Sartre's radical freedom threatens to collapse into arbitrariness, Frankl's freedom is always *freedom toward something* — toward a meaning that precedes the subject and addresses it. Being, in Frankl's ontology, is not the neutral ground of Heidegger's Being, nor the blank screen of Sartre's nothingness. It is a *call*. And the call is not answered by choosing a position but by inhabiting the question.

This is also where the present work situates itself. The task here has not been to choose between Heidegger and Sartre, or between either of them and the physicalists, or between the phenomenologists and the new metaphysicians. The task has been to insist that the relation between being and the being who observes it is not a problem to be solved by taking sides but a *structure to be inhabited*. The *Observer*, as this book uses the term, is not a neutral recorder. The act of observation is itself an ontological act: it changes the structure of what is observed — not because the observer projects meaning onto a meaningless screen, but because the potential that being carries requires a witness to become actual. That is not Heidegger's shepherd and not Sartre's creator. It is something in between, and the in-between is not a compromise but a genuine third position.

V. THE FIFTEEN PERCENT (15%) — AND WHY THE NUMBER MATTERS

Logotherapy is not widely cited in serious ontological discussions. *Biocentrism* is regarded with suspicion by the physicalists and with mild embarrassment by the *classical humanists*. *Speculative realism* — **Graham Harman's** *object-oriented ontology*, **Maurizio Ferraris's** *new realism*, **Markus Gabriel's** claim that the world does not exist as a unified totality but only as multiple fields of sense — occupies an interesting position precisely because it attacks the anthropocentric bias of both Sartre and Kant without retreating to naive physicalism. These currents together constitute something like fifteen to twenty percent of the contemporary

philosophical field — growing faster than any of the established blocs but still marginal in institutional terms.

The number is not a curiosity. It is a structural fact, and it connects directly to the situation of existential psychiatry — both its theistic and its atheistic strands — which finds itself in the same fifteen percent. Logotherapy, *Daseinsanalyse*, meaning-centred psychotherapy: all operate within a minority paradigm inside a profession dominated by biological and cognitive-behavioural approaches. This is not a coincidence of taste. It is the same underlying disagreement about the nature of the human being, expressed in two adjacent fields simultaneously. The coherence of that overlap — philosophy and psychiatry landing in the same fifteen percent, for the same reasons, facing the same institutional resistance — is itself a form of evidence. It suggests that the fifteen percent is tracking something real, not merely a fashion or a failure to grasp the mainstream.

What the fifteen percent has not yet produced is a sustained educational and institutional programme capable of transmitting its insights without either diluting them into self-help or hardening them into a new orthodoxy. This is the genuine pedagogical problem: how to break convention without losing rigour, how to open the question without dissolving the discipline. Several decades of attempts to introduce existential and meaning-centred approaches into standard psychiatric training and philosophical curricula have produced a stable minority but not a reversal of the dominant tendency. That stability is itself informative: the fifteen percent appears to be a genuine attractor, not a transitional state.

There is a further structural observation worth making. Works that operate in this territory — further from empirical certainty than natural science, further from lived immediacy than memoir, further from professional utility than clinical manuals — are read less and less by the general population, which has largely migrated toward the concrete and the immediately applicable. At the same time, academic philosophy and psychiatry tend to ignore them, not because they are wrong but because they do not fit the evaluation frameworks that govern institutional

research. They fall into a gap between two forms of inattention. But the fifteen percent itself — the space in which these works exist and these questions are taken seriously — is not something that can be reduced to zero without a corresponding reduction in the honesty of any intellectual culture that claims to address the full range of human experience. It functions as a *non-zero constant* in every serious discussion of mind, meaning, and being: always present, always minority, always necessary. Not because it has the answers. Because it refuses to stop asking the question that the other eighty-five percent has, for various institutional reasons, agreed to leave unanswered.

VI. NEITHER SCIENTIFIC NOR UNSCIENTIFIC — ON RELEVANCE

My grandfather has the doctorate. Frankl had two. I have neither. What I have is a legal qualification — the daughter of philosophy — a decade of close observation of what institutions do to people at their most vulnerable, a body of work in law, film, music, and historical research that carries its claims in public, and the lived knowledge of a family whose hundred-year arc encompasses war, displacement, institutional psychiatry, and the kind of intellectual ambition that refuses domestication by any single field.

The question this raises is not whether figures like Frankl, my grandfather, or myself are *qualified* to speak about the things we speak about. The question is whether the category of qualification, as the academic system defines it, captures what is actually required to make a genuine contribution to the understanding of being. I do not think it does — not because qualifications are unimportant, but because the most important qualification for the kind of work this book attempts is not institutional but *experiential*: the inability, earned through lived circumstances, to treat the questions as merely theoretical.

Frankl did not claim to have solved the question of meaning. He claimed to have observed, in conditions that removed every possible evasion, what happens to a human being when meaning is present and what happens when it is absent. The claim was empirical in the deepest sense — not statistical but *witnessed*. What the witness of Auschwitz gave him was not an argument but an *impossibility of evasion*. The philosophers who had written about anxiety and death in comfortable offices could not, after Frankl, pretend that their categories were sufficient. This is not anti-intellectualism. It is the insistence that certain kinds of knowledge are produced only by certain kinds of proximity — and that the philosopher who has never had to hold a system together under conditions of actual personal, familial, and institutional crisis is working with a model of human existence that is, at minimum, incomplete.

This is the sense in which figures like Frankl, my grandfather, and myself are neither scientific nor unscientific — but *relevant*. Relevant to the breadth of the question. Relevant to the mutual accountability of disciplines that have too long been permitted to ignore each other. Relevant to the reader — and they exist, in every generation — who finds the purely technical answer insufficient and the purely spiritual answer unverifiable, and who needs a third option that does not require abandoning either honesty or hope. That third option is not a resolution. It is a refusal to stop asking, conducted with as much precision as the questioner can muster and as much honesty about the limits of that precision as intellectual conscience requires.

The ticket of admission to these questions is not a title but a track record: a record of having tried to answer the same questions in law, in film, in music, in historical research, and in personal life — and of having paid something real for each attempt. My grandfather paid with decades of institutional friction and intellectual homelessness. Frankl paid with Auschwitz and everything that followed. I pay with what I pay. The amount differs; the structure is the same.

VII. WHAT THE DISSIDENT OFFERS THE „STADIUM“

The question posed at the opening of this chapter is a provocation, not a dismissal. The footballer is not wrong to play football. The physicist is not wrong to study physics. The phenomenologist is not wrong to read Heidegger. The question is whether any of these activities, pursued in isolation and without reference to the questions excluded by the very structure of the game, is sufficient.

Frankl's answer was that it is not sufficient — and that the insufficiency shows up in specific, observable ways: in the noogenic neuroses, in the existential vacuum, in the rate at which perfectly healthy people in prosperous societies find themselves unable to answer the question of what their life is for. The philosopher's answer — or at least the answer of the tradition this book is attempting to continue — is that the question of Being cannot be answered by remaining within any single field's own methods, because the question of Being is the question of the conditions under which any method is possible at all.

What the dissident offers is not an alternative stadium but the ability to stand at the edge of several stadiums simultaneously — to see what is played in each, to notice what each game excludes, and to ask, without belonging fully to any of them, what the excluded material might be saying. This is not a comfortable position. My grandfather made it slightly more comfortable by possessing the appropriate institutional credentials; I have made it slightly less comfortable by not possessing them. Frankl made it uncomfortable in a different way: by having been through something that meant he could no longer afford to be unserious about the questions.

The romanticism that **Chesterton** described — the sense that the beautiful, the joyful, the love that holds rather than possesses, is not an overlay on a neutral reality but a *dimension of reality itself* — cannot be accepted by scientific epistemology and cannot be simply rejected either. To reject it would require proof that three thousand years of philosophical and religious tradition placing it at the centre of human experience have all

been systematically wrong in the same way. That proof does not exist. The intuition that the mystery of being is not exhausted by its physical substrate is not mysticism in the pejorative sense. It is the oldest and most persistent finding of human inquiry, and the fact that it resists formalisation is not evidence against it but evidence of its depth.

This is where **Ante and Bartul Marušić (me)**, despite all their differences — of generation, of formal training, of temperament, of the specific historical pressures under which each has worked — find themselves on the same side of the same question. Not because they agreed to be. Because the question itself does not permit a comfortable settled position. And because both of them — in their different ways, by their different routes, at their different costs — have found that the refusal to stay settled is not a pathology but the condition under which the most serious thinking begins.

My grandfather did not expect that he would one day find himself defending me in the domain of philosophy or psychology — he expected to defend me in law. He even told me not to stray too far when I started reading David Hume and others. I did not yet know the contexts then. Even in my diploma thesis I drew on *Kant and Hegel*, and that was the first time he said he had not fully known me until that point. At the faculty, however, the philosophical background of legal thought was rarely taught in depth. I was not the first to attempt it, but I was among the fewer who looked not merely at the combination of humanities and social science, but at the underlying logic: that as long as the humanistic foundation remains unclear, no precise result in the social sciences can be truly clear either. Criminal law made this especially evident — it is the branch most directly dependent on psychology and the politics of intent. In the end, it was not the precision of law that drove me away but its imprecision, and the dispersion that comes with it, that made it impossible to stay. I left it much as he had left the Faculty of Natural Sciences in Zagreb, when the Faculty of Journalism in Belgrade was dissolved and the authorities refused to recognise the examinations he had already passed — refusing, as institutions often do, to honour what had been genuinely earned. He chose, as he put it, to be

defeated with dignity in philosophy faculty instead (of maths or journalism). He would go on to complete his studies there in compressed time — two years' worth of work in one, while others who had mocked the attempt fell behind — and eventually to retire in peace on the very same PMF faculty, where, alongside colleagues such as **Srdan Lelas** and others who shared the conviction that philosophy and natural science belong in the same conversation, he found the intellectual home he had been looking for from the beginning.

PHILIPP MAINLÄNDER AS A SECOND KIND OF ANTI- HEGEL AND THE KEY TRANSITION BETWEEN SCHOPENHAUER AND NIETZSCHE — MY BROTHER IN ARMS, BUT NOT IN CONCLUSION: THE PRECISION OF MY POSITION ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF DEATH

Mainländer was a remarkable philosopher — in the depth and consistency of his system, in the boldness of his conclusions, and in his intellectual provocation for the nineteenth century. It is tragic and telling — though a secondary point — that he lived his philosophy to its end and took his own life at the age of thirty-four, on the very day his book appeared; some of his sisters, who went on to promote and protect his work, later did the same. For precisely this reason, to research him is one thing; to merely copy out articles about him would be a pure intellectual sin. I wish to state my own position, not to have someone else construct it for me. Nihilism attracts me as an idea — and that in the light of my own history of suicidality, about which I have written at the opening of this book.

The Lorentz contraction $L = L_0\sqrt{1-v^2/c^2}$, in the context of Mainländer's distinction between proper length and perceived length, is something that subsequently corresponds to Einstein's formula as well. This is a familiar argument that speaks in his favour — and in mine.

However, whilst I use **Hegel** as an example of individual synthesis, and others use him as an example of social synthesis, Mainländer holds, in what appears at first a "mad" way, that God was an absolute unity outside our space and time, and that through the act of Creation He disintegrated through space, time, and multiplicity, entering into what we are, and vanishing within it. We are the spatiotemporal residue of that disintegration, its by-products rather than its purpose. Herein lies the fundamental tension between *syntropy* and *entropy* that perpetually unfolds around us. Mainländer regards synthesis as a *process of destruction*, not of creation. Notably, Mainländer (who was a pantheist and nihilist in the most radical sense — a thinker who dissolved God into the world and

assigned Him the role of self-liquidator) selectively appropriates Christian theology wherever it serves his pessimistic thesis, setting aside the positive metaphors and promises of Jesus that do not fit into the image of absolute dissolution — which is itself telling as regards his methodological consistency. The problem is that both extremes — radical pessimism and naïve optimism — are equally problematic. And the deeper problem is that *consciousness* is simultaneously the greatest illusion and the greatest force of both human beings and of being itself. I, for my part, look to the connectedness of being and to the monism of existence — but not in the sense that being is **everything** and a substantial unity, for that would equate us with God and the universe in a manner that is neither ontologically accurate nor existentially useful. Every pessimistic nihilist who is brilliant in identifying the processes of dissolution arrives at conclusions no less extreme than those of us “believers” who refuse to accept that God is something created or lost in this world. The dividers (*diaboloï*) are exclusively beings with will — persons, angels, and the like.

Mainländer holds that God is a hacker of Himself: from **Schopenhauer** he takes the idea of an infinite will and fuses it with us — but radically transforms it. That will which devours itself, and lends the appearance and the suffering of existence, will finally vanish — as our galaxy, the Sun, and everything else will vanish. Until then there is only friction, conflict, movement. I know that the question is not how something infinite could enter the finite, material, spatial, and temporal — but precisely this: that “eternal being” will, in Mainländer’s account, arrive at eternal peace. But here arises the question of the very nature of being. Is being static by nature? Mainländer’s thesis is that **nothing is better than existence** — because existence is suffering in itself, and God’s diffusion is supposedly a burden to itself when nothing occurs. Therefore rest is a phase before annihilation, and we are by-products of God’s dissatisfaction. In his account, the purpose of God was not to vanish because of chaos — the purpose was to create chaos, and we are victims and parts both of the chaos and of God Himself. I understand that position, though mine is the

opposite and dualistic in the question of substance and dimensions — whilst, on the question of disbelief in nothingness, it is monistic, as I consistently argue. The laws of matter are not so “different” from spiritual laws as was once supposed, and we may therefore Observe both.

➤According to **Newton**, inertia preserves an existing state, whatever it may be — motion or rest. The question of whether rest or activity as such is the better state is therefore beside the point; what matters is the *quality* of that state. There is something called **dynamic equilibrium** and **homeostasis**. This is neither euphoria nor depression. It is the most passive yet most active Observation of, and participation in, being — without any drama. I see this, for example, in the beauty of my wife who has creatively arranged the balcony: “nothing more” than that is needed by me in that moment. There are, of course, still hundreds of things to be dealt with — but the secret is often right before one’s nose. This is, in my view, the richest *passive Observation* of the self and of being — **Heidegger** clothed in love and fullness, without superfluous words. At present, however, this is frequently a “negative” battle — that is the reality. I will not call it a necessity in the absolute sense, though a present necessity it is, since due to freedom and its consequences some will remain in a state of dividedness. The task of every person and every scholar is to attempt to prevent or to heal this. The idea of the God-Man is a logical necessity for the salvation of our weakness, not an illusion of consolation — and I would be the first to reject it, and would be the greatest nihilist, were it not true, as is evident from my own arguments. This is in fact the deepest longing of the human being — and what I would call an **integrated identity**. The problem of my grandmother and grandfather was not that they died, but that it is not known what and who they were — for from order and upbringing they entered into complete physical, moral, and intellectual

chaos, which drove me towards philosophical and psychological inquiry, alongside my own changes and crises.

➤The laws of thermodynamics in nearly all their accepted formulations hold that photons do not vanish, nor does energy, despite the death of the Sun and entropy. There is degradation, but not destruction, as Mainländer wished. The quality of energy truly falls from a higher to a lower degree — but that lower degree is not processed to the point of annihilation.

The conflict between the **first and second laws of thermodynamics** unsettles our psyche as well. How does the conservation of energy correlate with the statistically easier path of deterioration and disorder over creation? This holds for matter and for the psyche alike. People not only do not wish to “hold themselves together” in old age and illness — they often cannot. Their own changes, external changes, and biological processes dismantle them throughout life, and they lose identity as they lose strength. The loss of strength brings a loss of personal will and consistency — but there is no human being who is entirely synthesised. Some form of dissolution is necessary — as good or as evil. How, then, to preserve oneself from meaninglessness? Mainländer’s idea that being will vanish is not tenable — but that it will lose structure: that is a real danger, regardless of whether one is an atheist or a believer. That is in fact the common enemy. The Devil — if he exists — knows the law of eternity. He does not wish to “kill” God, humanity, or himself. He wishes for things to remain constantly divided and meaningless. To succeed in this, he must constantly produce *antitheses*.

➤**Time, space, and suffering.** If time is a product of consciousness and relativity, it does not destroy eternity and being — on the contrary, it “cements” them. The fact that there is no synthesis (living/dead, old/young, good/bad) does not mean that individual particles do not exist and are not constantly dispersed through space and time. Being thereby — or rather *Supra-Being*, which Mainländer acknowledges, as do I — cannot be destroyed, and therefore most probably has no wish to be. **Hawking** too holds that once created, information cannot be destroyed — neither literally, nor through any perspective on temporal horizons. Suffering has not vanished — it is eternal in history, or at least eternal in its transformations. God is in the universe and in space, yet He also transcends it, and this universe is not so “different” from the posthumous or the extra-temporal. The relativity of time that supports Mainländer’s argument simultaneously undermines it at its very foundation. It is not his excellent mind that is meaningless — his mind demonstrated that intuition finds its grounding in later science — but perhaps his suicide that is.

Let us complicate things a little further. What of the wounds of the past that are equally eternal? The answer lies in a shift of perspective: we who are *not* God actually suffer less than He does, because wounds — pass. It is precisely God and being who would suffer most were they with us in eternal suffering without transformation. The *observer* is therefore always crucial, as is the question of which “point” one will serve. Mainländer is right that it would be, if nothing else, an “eternal agony.” Yet from that agony he did not flee as Nietzsche and Camus did in their somewhat optimistic fashion. Instead, he remained a radical Schopenhauerite, which is in fact the opposite extreme of the “religion of the hope of life.” This is not “pessimism” but a *religion and philosophy of the hope of peace*. I understand that position and have lived it — but here is the boundary: not only in the interpretation of the Gospels, but in the fact that we arrive at an equally intangible and unprovable solution, if not a more vulnerable one. Let us set aside ethics, judgement, and hell. Let us remain with the (meta)physical laws alone. God suffers with us at every moment, but does not suffer “He Himself” as such, in Himself and for Himself. The same holds

for joy. The fact that we, by those same laws, choose one option — particularly at the end — is solely a matter of ignorance or of different identities that will — sooner or later — be purified. The proof of this is not only the work of human beings, of ideas, of the philosophy of meaning, love, enlightenment, experience, and *co-salvation*, but it is also logical. A person at the end chooses themselves and their path. The only question is what we mean by *the end*. But this is already happening. We therefore both destroy and create ourselves. Yet no one will vanish from being because of mental or physical illness, nor remain in a state of falling below their own potential — but only through their own decision.⁵² By “decision” I do not mean a fully conscious psychological act — I mean the deepest ontological orientation of a being towards or away from its own source, which no

⁵² This requires a brief clarification of position. Biology — as **Frankl** observed in the concentration camp — plays a real role, and illness, once it has developed, genuinely narrows the capacity for decision and self-determination. I do not dispute this. What I wish to affirm, following a line of thought that runs through Augustine and thinkers such as Ilija Posavec, is that illness most often arrives as a later product of a prior wandering of the spirit: a privation, a gradual dimming of the person’s original orientation towards being, truth, and love. The capacity for decision diminishes, but is not extinguished; and crucially, the errors that led here were made both in states of health and of illness alike — through ignorance, inherited patterns, conformism, and the inertia of unreflected choices. The problem of identity is never reducible to a single cause. The aim — what I would call the fully realised person — is a beautiful, reasonable, and lasting being, full of love towards themselves, towards others, and towards being itself, willing to honour both the natural laws and the law of creative work. That aim does not exclude the broken, the ill, or the lost; it is precisely for them that it exists.

The problem is not that people save themselves at the expense of others, nor that the body matters as an important part of the person (notwithstanding examples such as Kolbe) — the problem is that people do not preserve their own dignity, or that of others, before the camp, nor within it, nor afterwards: something Frankl himself observed in his own way. Our nature follows us regardless of the fact that it additionally falls or weakens when conditions are harder than usual. But the camp arose from “peace and injustice” — not the other way around. Had someone other than Frankl said that Auschwitz was a laboratory of life, it might have appeared a perfidious analogy. As it was said by someone who was there and survived with his dignity intact, it stands as one of the most penetrating observations in the literature on the human condition.

illness alone can fully extinguish, though it may obscure it almost entirely. This is why the familiar injunction is that we do not “pass judgement.” Not so that we may not be judged ourselves, or that we have no ontological right to identify certain acts and certain people as partially evil — but because their being is separate and depends primarily on itself and on the *Supra-Being*, and only secondarily on us. God can exist without us, but not the reverse. It strikes me as peculiar that the critics of religion place God more firmly in this world than we ourselves do — from the precursors of nihilism to radical pantheism — whilst I remain on the position of *panentheism*. Even the relativity of space, which speaks of curvature and entities, says nothing of the “grave” of matter, spirit, and being in any formula. Space, time, and energy are — according to $E = mc^2$ — one and the same. How can infinity be destroyed in finitude and given an expiry date? Even in a state of rest — it exists, and would again be dissatisfied. Mainländer has therefore constructed a boomerang. It is precisely the *openness and concreteness* of the laws that prevents a human being from an act as radical as suicide. This is not a matter of empathy, nor of divine judgement, nor of pure logic — it is a matter of a rational intuitive problem that says “no” to us just as strongly as that part which has “had enough” of ignorance, contradictory truths, or pain. It is no accident that **Gabriel Marcel** — one of the rare thinkers who carried existentialism and Christian philosophy simultaneously without contradiction — also holds that hope, as an ontological category rather than merely a psychological one, is the only answer that is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but deeper than both. Here too stand **Linde** and others whom I mention later.

Let us return briefly to the concept of *relationality*, rather than only to the relationship between relativity and absoluteness. The shadow is the fourth dimension of the stick — but the stick is equally the shadow’s. The stick is literally smaller or larger in the eyes of an *observer* moving rapidly past it, and this is *objectively* smaller, not merely subjectively so. But the stick is, for itself, what it is. What, however, if that fast-moving passer-by attempts to push it through a tunnel narrower than the stick itself? Here a

paradox arises — though not a logical or an irresolvable one. The problem is, of course, that time is different for everyone. But the stick can be inserted: it would, however, have to come to a sudden stop, at which point it would extend and be once again as long as before. At that moment there are two objective possibilities: *either the tunnel will crack or the stick will be compressed*. What does this mean for my “actively and creatively observational” philosophy, and how does it distinguish it from illusion or arrogant solipsism?

➤Every *Dasein* is responsible — and a carrier of being — exclusively for itself, with all the conditions that shape it. We can significantly influence another’s path and help, but we are not the ones who “decide” and alter the essence of what is observed by force.

➤*Supra-Being* is the only guarantor and is primarily related in a relational sense to the individual. Lazarus’s sisters did not raise him — Christ did — but with Lazarus’s cooperation. They initiated it, and thus participated. In my view, participation in Observation — for all the reasons I cite — is not merely “persuading” reality and God, but a significant, though not independent, factor that participates in the *co-salvation* (*suspasiteljstvo*) of being, order, and existence.

➤We do not perform either salvation or mere insignificant Observation — rather, we make the one we Observe (and we must also Observe ourselves, which is in fact the most important question) into what I would call, in my own terms, a *relationally significant object*. But that object is not an object like the stick — it is another living *subject* with conscience, spirit, and decision. It is a person or being who is significant to us and we to them, and our Observation, prayer, care (*Sorge*), or anything else — *is* significant. Why? Because it literally exercises force, as in the example of the stick. What kind of force and why force? The same as parents over children: we — over those we do not wish to see lost in *entropy* — *shorten their present*

freedom in order to, through our significance and love, and through a kind of *syntropy* (through an independent yet also interior God), renew it as an **integrated identity** and restore to it — the possibility of a decision about itself. That decision is like an external upbringing which the person, if they do not accept it inwardly, may even experience as violence and flee into dispersal — as my grandmother did near death, driving me away. Yet in that final and most crucial all-temporal hope we stand before a wall of questions: can a person who is loved and valued — alongside all real negative and divided views of themselves, from others and from biology — refuse the good and choose *entropy*? We do not know; but we have, to the utmost — I will not say justified ourselves or tried hard, but rather — *connected* ourselves on an independent basis, where each ultimately chooses their own fate. Every friction, purification, and union — or tearing — is painful as here, but is directed by inertia towards *syntropy* or irrevocably towards *entropy*. The latter must be an objective possibility — otherwise everything is theatre. But it is not “stronger” than us — we only wish it to be stronger. Here we arrive at the boundary questions of freedom. We do not even fall into nothingness and death, but into *dividedness* — which is infinite, painful, and incomprehensible. That is why even the self-important yet blind person at least preserves integrity — and that is a quality that human beings lack. But that quality is insufficient if one does not accept one’s own dividedness and the multiplicity of truths, and if one does not choose — *life and love*. Why is Satan the symbol of lies and division? Precisely because of this. And he himself is not the same throughout history — which is why he is not the “king of death, evil, or nothingness.”

To the question of why the body dies first — the answer is: *the body does not die first*. It is the spirit that is first divided and “dies.” That is then manifested in the body, and then in the soul — in our identity and our form in eternal existence and essence. Besides, not even the body has yet died as we suppose. Think of bones — has the majority already dissolved? It has not. My grandmother has not yet vanished bodily into entropy, yet her

spirit was long since closed to love. The final question for her soul is — will she accept the effort, the reason, the love, and the connection to become not only young as she once was, but the *best young version* of my grandmother, such as never appeared before? In all of this: the body is neither an all-encompassing inner processor that drives everything, nor a mere illusion, nor the beginning and end of all things — it is a mediator and a witness.

DEATH IS NOT A SINGLE POINT. That is what others too say, who face it far more directly. It is a *process*. On one side it is not something distant, and on the other it is not something that can suddenly “strike” us — it flows in the background constantly, like *entropy*. But other processes flow as well. When someone’s heart or intestines fail, they simply did not know that the genetic process had begun much earlier — and this is an increasingly common thesis and the foundation of preventive medicine. Prevention is not omnipotent, however, and this ubiquity of death creates anxiety — but on the other hand it also dismantles death as something that is psychologically and ontologically, paradoxically, *weaker* than the fear we hold towards it. That is why fear is a biblical concept — equally so with love, the resurrection of the body, and love for another as for oneself (no more and no less). This cannot be the product of indoctrination — since almost no one has compelled me into religious instruction since I can remember — but is the fruit of reflection and of the experience of love and of the “small” miracles in my life, including passing decisive examinations when that appeared all but impossible.⁵³

⁵³ It was precisely the late assistant on the Faculty of Law in Zagreb **L. Gašparović** who inexplicably left the examination hall while we were sitting our exam — and at that moment a fellow student managed to whisper the entire question to me; the professor herself was later surprised that I had not failed. We are sometimes unknowingly directed towards one another, just as I now think of him, though he died suddenly and young from an inherited cancer of the stomach. He was not always to my liking, but our connection is strangely bound. At that time he was the one in the higher position, the more educated one — and I am now working in a way that, ontologically or at least theologically, serves

Why have I not yet died in a traffic accident, as my grandfather's colleague did? I do not know. Make of it what you will. I have no children, but I am fulfilled. He "accomplished himself," has two successful children — who were my professors — and left a mark in political science, yet died "early." We must be very careful how we look at life, and how much we deceive ourselves with outward appearances. That **colours** are seen differently — because a cat always sees the colour spectrum in its own way, and we in ours — are equal truths and realities, not illusions. But depth, hierarchy, and final synthesis are not relative. Hierarchy — in my view — exists. **Foucault** holds that hierarchies too are merely positions of power, and with him go the postmodernists. But I am not speaking of a hierarchy of power, but of *quality* — viewed through all the disciplines and their objective values. There is a healthy common sense in comparison, and there is the possibility of giving meaning for the sake of meaning itself and of universal *syntropy*, and not only for power. What universal *syntropy* means, and where the proof lies that it is superior to *entropy* — that is the legitimate end and beginning of such a philosophical discussion.

What does **Kant** say of people who do not rest upon *reason* as a supreme value — and yet possess a good spirit? Like the people with disabilities (mental and physical) whom I have encountered, who were pushed in a truck, and were happy — happier than me. They are not necessarily in blissful ignorance — perhaps their reason is deeper and different, and even closer to "nature." I remember a neighbour with autism who, seeing me rarely, would always greet me warmly from the tram as though he saw "a god." And I come home tired and scattered. Why does he do this? Because he is mad — or because he sees life and my value more

both him and me, not merely continuing someone else's vocation. At the Faculty of Law, students are never left unsupervised during examinations. Had things not unfolded as they did, I would not be where I am. Joy in knowledge is difficult precisely because we are accustomed to something else — yet I would not go back, nor change anything, nor depart into permanent peace even if it were offered to me. That is not fate; it is a sign of how often our conclusions about death and the meaning of life are premature.

clearly? And cats are not entirely “stupid,” I have noticed. *Reason* is one quality — and one often impaired. But to be *unreasonable and ill* is not the same as to *have no reason*.

To conclude *Mainländer’s* critique of Kant and Schopenhauer, and my own closing position:

➤**Kant** and **Schopenhauer** automatically assumed that extension and space are equivalent concepts dependent on the perceiving subject and mind. **Mainländer** distinguished between proper length and perceived length — and, though a nihilist, correctly perceives that reality and its extension are objectively there, owing to the God Whom — of course — he understands differently from me, and to Whose intentions he assigns a radically different role.

➤**Schopenhauer** holds that causality is an innate structure of the mind. **Mainländer** leaves this in the zone of perceptual inquiry: that things in nature cause one another at all — this we learn through experience, not through birth. Causality as determinism — exists.

➤**Schopenhauer** believed that understanding does everything by itself, changing the Will and leading it towards a kind of peace and partial self-annihilation. **Kant** sought synthesis — in some ways similarly to me, but differently from **Hegel**: synthesis as the capacity that “cements” partial impressions into a single sketch of the object. When we look at an object or subject as a whole, we first see it in parts, then assemble it in our minds and distil its nature. This resembles Hegelian examples, but moves in a different direction — because we construct only ourselves, not the entire system and God. **Mainländer** holds that both we and God are destroying the system, not building it.

Epistemology and knowledge

I. **Kant** distinguishes between two faculties of reason — the practical and the theoretical. We as *things-in-themselves* must be free — that is the necessity of his system. It is important here to note the difference from **Sartre**: Sartre will take that very demand for freedom and ground it in *being-for-itself* (*être-pour-soi*) — that is, in the very structure of consciousness, which always surpasses itself and is never finished or identical with itself. Kant, by contrast, locates freedom in the *noumenon* — in what lies beyond experience and what we cannot grasp, only presuppose. I share that Kantian “beyond” in the ontological sense: there are dimensions of being that are not accessible to experience, yet are not separated from it — the worlds are not so disconnected. Bodily phenomena and shocks that we observe reflect those more radical metaphysical and spiritual processes, and new discoveries in physics and neurology confirm this more than they refute it. Both **Schopenhauer** and **Kant** held that for this very reason all “compulsion” and vision comes from the subject, not from external things. **Schopenhauer** applies this to the negation of the will and to a Buddhist-quasi-Christian asceticism and struggle against the hypocrisy of the “saint who wishes, for higher values, to flee the world.” **Kant** develops this further through postulates, imperatives, and principles — drawing away from Observation as decisive. **Mainländer** sees an error in both their epistemologies: if the external world and reality define our view, we need no mental freedom to discover the motive of “saintly asceticism.” It is, in his account, simply a different kind of will. And our length, and our existence — are something objective.

In brief:

Kant looks at everything as something that exists — both we and the world — but holds that it cannot be fully grasped *how*, and so sees only *phenomena*; for him the most important are the *noumena* — the soul and what we cannot see. Causality and meaning are tools of our reason — a divine category that has been given to us. We are architects of experience and of decisions that arrive *a posteriori*, and we are endowed with a transcendental capacity and freedom. I, for my part, extend this *biocentrically* to the phenomena here — though this looks like magic. But it is not substantive monism: we do not control reality like Neo in the Matrix, nor are we God. The difference is that we have an important role — neither passive, nor merely individual, nor messianic, but *I — you — we — God*. Knowledge is important not only for understanding life and philosophy, but for existence, construction, and activity — which is why I deliberately blend ontology and epistemology, consciously and perceptively, because integrating ontology and epistemology is the only way to philosophise from lived experience, and not only from abstraction.⁵⁴

Schopenhauer: We all have a processor of will — blind, irrational, yet the only programme — that makes decisions by itself, but through the *body* and the self that experiences suffering. But the body is neither an all-encompassing inner processor, nor an illusion, nor the beginning and end of everything — it is a mediator and a witness. Our individual will can, admittedly, separate itself from the general — through nirvana. **Locke**, with whom Kant polemically contends, goes to the opposite extreme: the mind at birth is a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) — no innate ideas or processors, and the only “inner” source of knowledge is reflection, that is, the Observation of one’s own mental operations. But even that reflection, in Locke’s account, arrives only after experience — so it too is derived, not primary. This distinguishes him radically from both Kant (who defends innate categories) and Schopenhauer (who defends an innate will).

Mainländer: *Individuation* is not an illusion (nor merely the awakening of the Will, as in **Schopenhauer**), but an ontological fact — yet as a fragment of God Himself. The world around us has its own reality independent of us. The connection is partly subjective (space and time as our tools — here he agrees with **Kant** and **Schopenhauer**), but causality between external objects is objective, and a single law governs it — dissolution. We can, however, accelerate or slow that dissolution, and objectively so, not only within ourselves. Herein lies a great step forward — but in a negative direction in the use of that principle.

All of them look at phenomena, and at space and time as tools — or as a “scientific” cyclicity, as in **Nietzsche** afterwards. Only **Mainländer** rightly transferred those tools from the subjective and metaphysical into the physical — and thereby inadvertently opened the world and rendered “a service” through his own error. **Heidegger** went to work on the *phenomenon* in itself — not as a cognitive relation between subject and object, but as the structure of being itself, in which space and time are the *horizon of Dasein*, not our spectacles — and here we all diverge. That we

are “more special” and more open to Being through language, consciousness of it, of death, and of temporality — is itself a hidden subjectivism of “shepherding.”

— **!Whilst I regard causality and epistemology!** as (also an) objective and not merely subjective “things” — I understand causality as a *relational* reality that arose between the subjects who preceded me, and who in their mutual *relationality* created both themselves and the world and me at the beginning. What matters is not only the “background” and the nature of our perception, but intention and role — which in my view is not only observational but *co-creative* and *co-salvific*, so that *syntropy* may “return to the game,” and death and suicide may be shown finally as both a senseless act and an entrenched prejudice. Causality is neither a mere subjective construct of the mind (**Kant**) nor an objective mechanical law governing dissolution alone (**Mainländer**) — but a relational reality that arises between subjects and is therefore both objective and directed towards subjects. Our *capacity* for this is innate — but our *work* in that direction is either conscious or unconscious, or absent, or wanders in the wrong places in search of *syntropy*. In theory, the human mind can will *entropy* — but this cannot be imagined in reality until it is seen, and no one has seen it. We must see precisely the person who, at the apex of the synthesis of life and “death,” chooses their *entropic* identity — where the questions of ego and freedom are most secret in the world. For then a person chooses against comfort and against truth, and against good and life. And the human being in their very self *is* — goodness and life — in their innate essence. At that point one must simply let them go. Neither with joy nor with overlong grief.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ This footnote was prompted by a dream I had the previous night. I dreamt of some police officers abusing children, threatening them, while some women participated as guards. Those who should have been guarantors of safety were corrupt and corrupted, and the children pleaded for it to stop, trying to help one another. In the dream I instinctively imagined myself and other representatives of authority carrying out criminal accountability. The appropriate punishment is not the point here, nor why perpetrators

We often connect our ontology and existence to the fear of discomfort. Because comfort appears to us, through inertia, as a “guarantee” of stability, peace, and further progress. At times this is truly self-deception so as to preserve some personal or learned value system and expectations. At times we flee even from “excessive comfort” as a possible weakness whilst conditions for it do not yet exist (I will not even say merely that we have not yet earned pleasure, because the physical-spiritual pleasure *is* the point of the “peace” that is “dynamic” or at least positionally “static” in the inevitable *micro-oscillation*).

REALITY AND THE HUMAN BEING AS A CREATURE OF INERTIA, GOAL, AND PLEASURE

Bitterness may be a natural reaction, but we do not know whether weakness is the rule or the exception. On the street we see only the healthy and the active. These are already strong victors and the result of some spiritual or natural selection. This creates an illusion of “happiness” and easy living. People who are dying in homes, hospitals, care facilities, and trenches are not seen — and the image that this exists, and why it exists, is not something one wishes to create. In public, images and atmospheres of

sometimes go unconvicted — that is a subject for another discussion. What is ontologically significant is this: how deeply the dignity of a person is violated when they are reduced to a mere means rather than an end — as **Kant** would say. But this is not the self-destruction of being as a whole, as **Schopenhauer** supposes; it is the destruction exclusively of one’s own soul, and the dissolution of the identity of those caught in that destruction. A similar example is the mother who handed over her mixed-race child to soldiers and declared it a bastard — partly out of fear, partly out of conviction. Today both live on, each in their own world and trauma. Vengeance, even when it follows a Kantian or Hegelian logic of the abolition of evil, serves entropy alone. Those who commit evil already have a destroyed identity; they need transformation and redemption. Victims need love and recovery, not hypervictimisation or the revenge that draws them into further dissolution. The demystification of evil is the most powerful force that demonstrates entropy is not stronger simply because it is more visible and more painful.

fear or condemnation are genuinely constructed, but never an image of *reality*. The films that move people today are not those with the best effects but those with the fewest. Where has reality gone? Bitterness, faith, science, and philosophy are not windows onto reality, nor reality itself. They are only *by-products and manifestos* of a sensed (meta)physical reality, I would say. To us, sex, birth, and death are such mysterious things that we are perpetually astonished by them or flee from them into this *illusion* of the everyday. And that is not even the smallest part of reality we have glimpsed — whilst by illusion I mean not an externally imposed illusion but a *consciously lived illusion* that becomes the subconscious idiotism of technocratic and social life. Why? A prominent scientist from the Ruđer Bošković Institute once said to me: “Bartul, what we are doing and talking about here has absolutely nothing to do with what will even matter in fifty years!” When I look at the news from the year 2000 and at today’s, I understand that he is right. Great artists like **Bruce Lee** or **Goran Bregović** are often seen as examples of success, talent, idols. But they are in fact “graduates of the school of life” — practising philosophers, in other words. Bregović, whose lyrics are full of existentialist ironic tones, once said: “Every election is historic, is it not? They used to tell me: study and work and things will go well for you. And the only thing I ever did was — work.” I shall not enter into the moral dimensions. I recently met the dear **Rade Šerbedžija**, about whom everyone asks how, why, where he was and what he appeared in, and how he acted. These are all unimportant things. He is a practical philosopher of very strong spiritual power — very warm and perceptive. I asked him: “You are eighty years old, you have had a hip operation though you are holding up well. You are still working. Are you not afraid of old age and death, as your colleague **Val Kilmer** was? I am already gripped by mortal fear.” He looked at me so firmly, coldly, and self-assuredly that it seemed I was insulting him. He waved his hand: “What old age — only He knows how long we will be here, and it does not concern me.” This was not escapism and irony. It was my plain insult to being, at which he was appalled that someone as “young and intelligent” as I would ask such a thing. And I thought I was asking the most real and humane

question. “Look, Bartul, I will not stop playing tennis while I am alive,” he said, laughing. Without a trace of resentment, ideology, or politics. His physical stance was so deeply planted in the earth, and his gait so grand, that I am objectively in a worse state of spirit than he — and I have no interest in flattering him.

When I saw all three realities — and the fourth, where my father did not surrender despite the most serious illnesses — I notice the absurdity of total illusions, but also the question of confronting the *inertia* of oneself rather than of social changes. Everyone fought, died, and reproduced. But each had a different approach. Some are panickers, some are indifferent, some are combative, some lethargic. I often ask myself whether I am on the right path at all. Objectively I hold that I am somewhere in the middle. Philosophising at thirty-eight is both the best and the worst thing I could have done. Yet the formula for having *peace in alienation* is something few have been taught in schools. I asked the world champion **Enver Idrizi**, the first medal-winner for Croatia and our acquaintance and fellow karateka: “What happens when we are left alone and no moves serve us any longer? Not even the experience of fighting on the tatami or in the café, where there are at least some rules and some momentum of recovery. What will serve us when we no longer have wars, enemies, or friends? What will help us then, lying alone in bed?” And my father, himself a karateka and a mountain of a man, now lies half-immobile. Enver replied: “You are a genius — you are right.”

I must be honest about something regarding my father that I have not been precise enough about elsewhere in this book. I spent years being impatient with his approach to life — the technical discipline, the kata, the mechanical repetition without what I experienced as catharsis or synthesis, the dissociation between rigorous daily practice and the kind of integrated meaning I was searching for. I now understand that I was measuring his method by my own standards, and getting it wrong.

The recovery of his spirit after each crisis — the return to presence, to recognition, to conversation — was not achieved *despite* the mechanics. In

part, it was achieved *through* them. The physical discipline, the structured daily routine, the body that continued to move even when the mind was struggling — these created the conditions in which the spirit could find its footing again. I am not certain which came first, and I am not sure the question has a clean answer. What I can say is that the separation between mechanical practice and spiritual recovery that I assumed was real turns out to be more porous than I thought. Spirit and mechanism are not enemies. They are, at the very least, neighbours — and sometimes the mechanism opens the door.

This is also a correction to any reading of this book that implies the spirit alone is the agent of transformation. It is not. The small technical things — the supplement on the table, the appointment kept, the walk around the block, the physiotherapy session, the structured meal — these are not spiritually neutral. They are, in the formula of this book, a form of V_{will} made concrete. The mediator who controls neither the illness nor the bureaucracy perfectly, but who shows up and does the mechanics — that mediator is still changing Φ .

When the water flows, we all know how to swim. Boredom is often a salvation, yet we treat it as an enemy. This is proof that boredom is a “necessary evil” and not something good. And an overdose of, say, drugs is proof of how dangerous dopamine and cortisol — pleasure and anxiety — are to life when not kept in measure; but why do we reach for them? Not because of addiction, society, and all those old clichés. Rather, because our spirit tends towards the *infinite*. Not towards infinite freedom, as is always said, but towards an infinite *spiritual pleasure*. Pleasure is something regarded as either counterfeit or forbidden; but it is only a matter of the *degree* of pleasure and the *lawfulness* of pleasure in everything — with the qualification that I regard that lawfulness as ideal in both worlds, and not as “imposed.” The fact that we do or do not feel pleasure in work, and even in suffering, is always our path towards a goal. Our goal is exclusively — **passive or actively passive**: to have and to live happiness, peace, and feeling at the end. Whether through a legacy, a family, nobility, or the

acquaintance of wonderful worlds in the clouds and in dimensions — it does not matter. However much the idea is imposed upon us that happiness lies *in the process*: no. The human being is **NOT** a creature of process — but of *goal*. Even when we have no set goal, our goal is to see what the goal and the result of the day and of life are.

THAT GOAL is therefore often either *false and illusory* and constantly changing, or *lost*, or we must still *reach it*. Eden was not a place where infinity was incomplete, but one where the wish arose to “supplement” and overcome it. It is not a place where work, freedom, and pleasure were deficient — rather, we shall be “blinded” by returning to it; as when one emerges from a dark tunnel into daylight. That will be a negative and a positive shock, but the degree of quality of life and holiness in the new paradise will not differ greatly from what had been and could have been. Even then God was looked upon, there was no shame, and there was no eating of animals. There will be differences, and there will be that phenomenon of the pizza that smells best when we approach it from a distance and long for it. Perhaps it will be a richer pizza — but it will still be only a pizza. We shall grow accustomed to it once again. But that habituation will not be “boredom” but *peace, joy, and undivided, fearless work*. Why not all of us — or not all equally quickly — will enter that paradise, I shall explain later when discussing the law of the individual spirit. Hegel as “prophet” and saviour is irrelevant to me there. He is for me only a techno-logical dialectical option that prevents “evil from stupidity.” The human being is in truth a creature of slow knowledge, naïve, wavering between cause and consequence — but the individual spirit has “knowledge” of good and evil. We do not need much knowledge “so as not to sin.” That would be mere slavery. Our mind is free and in development, but our spirit is already *determined by perfect laws* even when we are not conscious of them on account of the “corrupted” body, brain, habits, or other problems of consciousness. This is why when the soul is stripped bare it needs no book and no healthy neuron — **it needs above all “Observation,” “love,” “grace,” and “one’s own decision,” which depends**

on a conscious (!) inclination towards some ontological option. Further elaboration will follow.

Žižek too is aware of the vicious circle of the various Hegelian options and advocates in a sense *the radical acceptance of imperfection through transparency and privacy in this world*. But here too we see the problem. Every automation that helps us is immediately targeted by dissatisfaction, because we do not have the control, perfection, and interests we had wished for. Žižek has in fact read well the problem of “parallax” (*Paralexe*) and the awareness that every change of bureaucracy introduces new rules, and that the human being is free precisely when — I would say — he is in a stalemate (or even in silence), whilst his spirit is clearly unfree. I, however, accept the “stalemate,” move into the heavy centre, “buy time,” drive “in neutral” — but “smuggle” the goal and the solution to this problem into the Christian *otherworldly*. This is not the “old flight” but in my view the “newest flight” — that is, a flight from the real contemporary flight.

Equally, I do not flee from the fact that all — even perceptive Christians and anti-Christians who know Christianity — point to the idea that the whole process of the Kingdom of God begins here and perhaps even ends in a new material form of the world. Yes — but it does not end literally here and in this epoch; that is already clear. I am perhaps only a contemporary version of the old classicists: a person fighting between logic, a *quasi-Machiavellianism* of saving the spirit, and the experience of the inexhaustible beauty of life alongside its inexhaustible real crises. My goal and the truth itself are not exclusive but *inclusive* — yet precise and definable later. For I do not wish to be a hostage of the “vicious circle,” even if my presuppositions were wrong. If they are wrong, then a significant part of *possible reality* falls away — not merely the odd life and one book.

This is why I also hold that the suicide we examine is an act a person performs only when he is *certain and stable* in it — yet we often look upon such people as “labile or pitiable,” as persons who have fallen out of reality. All scientific critics will leap upon me for this, but *tunnel vision* is precisely an almost pure decision, and not a state of ambivalence. For whoever fears

an act does not perform it. The extinguishing of initial fear is the extinguishing of natural law and the attempt to skip a dimension, out of saturation with this stalemate. But no one jumps from a bridge in a state of inner division — or at least must strive towards some degree of inner equilibrium. What confuses people is that the human being who is “divided” as a being does *not* perform divided things simultaneously. Simplification is both the greatest salvation and the greatest trap for the brain. To conclude on Hegelianism: we are part of the human race, of its curse and its salvation and its broad family — but we are separate souls and responsibilities, and here society is irrelevant. I have always said that we “lived equally well and equally badly” under every system, and that we are neither pure conformists nor traitors nor opportunists nor saints. Here a perceptive dissident film-maker from Austria became very angry with me when I said this. How, then, to connect Heidegger’s partially correct idea of the “ownness” (*Eigentlichkeit*) of death and life with my philosophy of “reciprocity”? By gradually distancing myself from Hegel. First I shall “stir the pot,” as I habitually enjoy doing. In the end I shall sift everything into my final thesis.

ANXIETY AND FEAR

What is common to nearly all of us is anxiety — which recurs as a thread throughout. What I argue is that the problem lies not in anxiety itself but in how it is framed. The fear of returning to nothingness, or my own fear of nothingness and meaninglessness, is in itself unfounded, because in nothingness we would not suffer at all. Anxiety is further a form of untruth across several domains, since it distorts every image and steers many towards wrong psychological and philosophical paths where logic and feeling offer only consolation. The real anxiety, however, is the one arising from our responsibility and from “nil’ing” as a process — from the uncertainty that can burden those who love us, yet equally spur them on. This nil’ing, running in parallel with creation, points to two intuitions:

creation is a growing process — so much so that even Sartre regards everything as creation. For this reason, every “nil’ing” is an unnatural course. Dying is therefore not “natural,” and perhaps neither is bodily death in its present form, in which one of its defining features is *anxiety*. This is perhaps why death is, in a sense, redemptive: we have already partially died. Furthermore, this anxiety is also a sign of a kind of “conscience,” which directs the problem towards the moral domain; and our fear is not of death itself but of *life after death and before death*. Fear is bound to our deeds, projects, family, reputation, pain, and future. If fear does not transfer into death, our *attitude* is certainly carried forward to some degree. I shall not elaborate further on anxiety in the psychological sense here, as that would extend the concept into the wrong chapter. All these values are, in the end, only *forms*. The doubts in question are equally tormenting and difficult to resolve in practice. This is precisely why it is “easier” to return to the ontological framework within which any values can be formed at all.

We are all, in a sense, existentialists — all of us who struggle with anxiety in any form and with the question of existence, of living, of merely surviving. We all either exalt it, ignore it, live with it, belittle it, or analyse it. All of us who are not pure phenomenologists or theoreticians are in practice existentialists. Sartre and I, Saint Paul and the person who ended their path in suicide. Some are *theistic* and some — the majority in that direction — *atheistic*. Whilst I, like Kant, hold that the nature of the human being is the same in the cave-dweller as in the person of today, others will rightly ask whether Adam and Eve existed, whether they understood what was happening, and how their sons reproduced with one another — and here we enter the irrecoverable terrain of total theology, philosophy, and science alike.

Dr Lauren **Cook** has likewise observed that our Millennial and Generation Z cohorts exhibit the highest levels of anxiety. Whilst she, as I do, attributes this in part to social factors — and takes self-acceptance, intersectionality, and self-nurturing as more important than medication — the other side of

the coin is once again overlooked: my own turn towards individual fragility and vulnerability. Anxiety must be accepted, yes, but also made conscious — not simply lived with. In my view, the task is to defeat it through life, not alongside it. It is, in other words, a chess match of passive resistance against an invisible opponent. If that proves impossible, then one must at least find this-worldly and other-worldly meaning in the suffering, offer it as an act of love towards another, and accept one's defeat — or a modest compromise with medication. In any case, the goal is neither to be healthy nor to be ill. My own intersection lies precisely here: the cause and manifestation of these symptoms are mutually contaminating — society and the individual each infecting the other — whilst the possibility of healing exists equally on both sides. With the caveat that healing is a temporary matter, whilst the long-term reality is the imperfection of the world and of the human being, and the necessary turn towards love and work that carries a metaphysical and spiritual dimension directed outward — towards others — and not only inward. One must love and care for oneself as well, but for the sake of completing the mission of one's life in an elevated and meaningful way, not merely to earn and survive. Every form of self-help and every diagnosis is therefore valid and contains a part of the truth — but even if we master all of it, eschatology and Christology remain, in my view, the key to the cyclical problems whereby some generations suffer from arrogance, others from physical hardship and war, and others still from psychological distress, from fear of the same, or from perpetual competitiveness, and so on. I shall never know whether human brazenness is the cause or the consequence of disorder.

WHY “EXISTENTIALISMS”?

Because the concept itself was a problem not only in “street-level” discussions of that era but between the leading “existentialists” of the time and those who did or did not consider themselves such. In fact it was **Gabriel Marcel** who first delivered a lecture and introduced the concept — before Sartre, during the Second World War. He rejected his own (and through it very nearly Sartre’s) concept of existentialism, and was even appalled at the idea of atheism and existentialism taken together. If nothing else, he was among the first; and his idea of “secondary reflection” and direct insight, and of *mutual participation in being through love and the “awakening of being as its custodianship”* — I have taken up, or rather “discovered,” as my own. That mutual empathy of beings and of different living and departed generations is a *window* into being and into life rather than into death, and is both sensorially and logically closer to the truth about the absolute *Thou-thou-I-we* than the relative image of mere cerebral memory and the postponement of forgetting. When this is not done from despair and nostalgia, and when beings are simply observed in a “non-technical” way, then the soul is more a sensory and philosophical “proof” than a fiction. Here both he and I agree even with Heidegger — but we look one step further. Although that step is difficult to prove, the connection in one form or another is always beyond question. And the fact that not everyone equally influences the bringing-to-life of a person’s image, work, and mutual bonds is only proof that the *degree of existence* is a real struggle that makes all the difference. The degree of quality of existence is neither a norm nor a necessity, but a pure soul and a pure mind — and love that acts independently of or in spite of this body — has a logic of the infinity of relation and time in that “unspeakable,” and does not comprehend death. The unspeakable appears to be only sensory and emotional, yet it is not. Why else would the human being tend towards beauty, life, and dignity? The human being does everything technically, yet technique is never his aim — not even when he wishes it to be.

An unencumbered and independent relation becomes deep, and there is a strong probability that the person who is the other subject (and not a passive object) will receive every action directed towards him — since the relation of the soul is equally and more rich than the relation of matter. This is my view. For just as our stomach always loves and needs food, so the souls of the living and the dead long for infinite relations, creations, respects, and exalted love. Although I see that this philosopher — a Catholic as well — fits into these reflections of mine, perhaps subconsciously and not by chance, this is not indoctrination: I have simply found someone “similar to me,” and his book too had been standing uselessly on the shelf. One thing is the return to the past or to a parallel present, and another is the return from temporal forgetting. We are not even conscious that sooner or later someone returns things and people — and ourselves — from forgetting, unconsciously. Otherwise we would think that everything truly began with us. Even when we do not glorify, we lean upon predecessors and models, and sometimes “totemically” — not seeing that these were “ordinary” people like us, but with a will and a talent that is everything and not bloodless. Not only does Marcel see in others not necessarily “hell” but “salvation” and Observation and love — equally, in the matter of freedom as “abyss” or “gift,” the differences are crucial.

I want to name something that I have kept implicit throughout this book and that deserves to be stated plainly, even at the risk of sounding like the kind of thing I would normally be suspicious of. The experiences I am describing — the small improbable rescues, the prayers that were answered when the odds were against it, the interventions that arrived at the exact moment they were needed — are not, I believe, simply confirmation bias. They are a pattern. I have lived it too many times to dismiss it as coincidence, and I am not, by temperament, a credulous person.

This is, in the language of this book, *a posteriori* evidence — not the *a priori* deduction of a convinced believer. I did not start from faith and find experience that confirmed it. I started from experience — often painful,

often humiliating experience — and found that the hypothesis of a responsive universe fits the data better than the alternative. Rupert **Sheldrake**, whose work on *morphic resonance* and extended mind remains controversial and largely outside the mainstream, has argued since 1981 that consciousness is not limited to the physical body, that memory may not be stored only in brains, and that prayer and intention may have measurable effects that conventional science has not yet developed adequate tools to study. I am not a Sheldrake disciple. But I take his question seriously, because it is the same question I am asking: what if the mind-field extends further than the skull? What if intention leaves a trace in the fabric of things? These are not rhetorical questions. They are the questions my experience has forced me to take seriously.

The honest position is this: I cannot prove it. Neither can those who deny it. The *n* factor remains. But the accumulation of small improbable events — what I can only call the record of answered prayers and near-misses — is itself a form of evidence, even if it is not the kind of evidence that a double-blind trial would accept. It is the evidence of a life lived, which is, in the end, the only kind I have access to. And in that sense, it is *a posteriori* not *a priori*: I did not reason my way to faith. I was argued into it by events.

All frequently lean on one another, for and against theses. This *neo-Socratism*, dialogue, elenctic and eclectic method, “participation in being,” and the struggle against the “sophists of the modern age” is in truth another backbone of the existentialist struggle than the Sartrean one — and one closer to me. On the other hand, I myself invoke **B. Spinoza**, for instance, and there are various critiques of his rationality; nor is anyone identical to another. Spinoza is *non-teleological* and too static for me anyway. Yet what fascinates me is that Marcel’s search for truth was inspired too by the torment and anxiety of the loss of his mother — just as I have been moved by the loss of my grandmother, grandfather, brother-in-law, neighbours, acquaintances, wife, father, and pets. And here is that *limit situation* of psychological and philosophical awakening described by **Karl Jaspers** that cannot happen in a school classroom. That sense of the

palpable presence of someone who is gone and is no longer palpable surpasses direction, conviction, or proof. We can indeed find many authors with whom the similarities and differences are great, yet it is worth using and citing them through one's own reflections. For example, **Matija Vlačić Ilirik** was someone often cited in Germany; my grandfather would become angry and shout at colleagues who called him *der Illiricum*, insisting that he was the Croat Matija Vlačić Ilirik. More important is that he, as a Protestant and a very different philosopher from Marcel, held certain positions I too selectively accept in my eclecticism. For instance, the substantiality of original sin and even the absolute incapacity of the human being, which does not deny but in the end entropises human will to the point where we are genuinely powerless to save life, justice, meaning, and healthy reason all the way to the end. This is because our image has come to resemble more the "devil's" than God's, because of the fall of the early humans, the fall of the genes, and the fall of nature. This explains even rationally our irrational or half-truthful behaviour. Immediately one asks: how does this sit alongside panentheism? How can free will and determination alongside dependence on grace, prayer, and salvation go together? Precisely because of that part of our being which is not desecrated — and because of which we live and reproduce. I myself often look upon life as "the saving of what can be saved" and a constant tension between living and surviving. Whilst some see this as bitterness, illusion, or pessimism, I see it as reality — and as a task that builds life precisely in a ruinous environment.

Beyond *Pascal's wager* — which I do hold, and which I find rational rather than fearful — I also hold to something more personal: a syncretism and a consensus that I did not plan but arrived at. Nowhere, in any tradition I have seriously examined, is suicide considered a solution or a final truth. Not among believers, not among genuine sceptics, not even among the most honest nihilists — only among those who have stopped asking questions. That consensus is worth something. And the process by which I arrived at it has been *slow* and *mutual*: between death and life, between syntropy and entropy, between spirit and mechanics. To argue about which

came first — the chicken or the egg — makes no sense when the task at hand is to *keep both alive*. The salvation of this life and whatever follows it is a task, particularly for those who believe. But atheists too leave doors open here, even if they build more on this side of the threshold.

Life, like love, is a mystery — and a bond between two worlds. How we relate to life *here*, irrespective of its causes or its ultimate result, is already equivalent to how we relate to life beyond it. That is a necessary struggle — harder than the alternatives, but liberating. Not an escape from contradictions and difficult truths, but the only possible medicine. The division, the crack, the pain — Žižek and others recognise all of this. If they seek acceptance of the gap, then those of us who are Christian need patience for both: for the gap and for what fills it. Realism, the impossibility of perfection, the refusal to explain everything away — alongside the work for both worlds and both ideals.

That is the only universally supported position. Everything else is, in the end, a kind of defeat — and that is not a great conclusion for any serious inquiry to reach. Great science, as Einstein suggested in one form or another, must arrive at simple things. How being withdrew to create separate *Daseins* — and all these real or mental phenomena, and the non-living things — we do not know. But the fundamental assumption that nothingness and anxiety are in the vast majority of cases false, or *egoistic*, because what cannot be measured but what intuition — spiritual, bodily and scientific — consistently points towards is that *freedom exists*: that idea I will not surrender. If it is not yet formed here, or in any state, I believe it forms through relationship, at the end of history. And if not even then — I still hold that I have lived a meaningful and, in its own way, good life, despite weakness and open questions. It was perhaps precisely in the dead ends of the crack that I created the ideals and the result.

But we must come down from that divine practical or abstract idea — because the ant does not know what the human thinks. A friend of mine once said exactly that. And so it is with us: we do not have the tools, which is perhaps also good, for omniscience. With omniscience there would

probably be less freedom, and whether pain would be greater or smaller — it would not exceed peace, and every medal has its other side. One must be careful with conclusions. But one must still spread experience and history. To blame God, the devil, the state, or even oneself is not a solution — but to be critical, and still stable, is something every non-philosopher knows better than the philosopher, and here I must stop.

MENTAL ILLNESS ACCORDING TO THE EXISTENTIALISTS (SARTRE): “LIE OR TRUTH”?

I registered for psychotherapy with a psychiatrist who described herself as an “existentialist”: the human being holds meaning and the reins in his own hands, in the present moment, and decides whether suffering or illness shall have the final and destructive word. I did not make the appointment, as the waiting lists are long, and I eventually dropped it. The approach is not in question; on the contrary, I am glad to see someone looking beyond a single discipline. However, I immediately read that famous Sartrean quotation from *The Family Idiot* on Flaubert (1971): ***“Mental illness is the outlet that a free organism, in its total unity, invents in order to survive a situation in which it cannot live.”*** A phenomenal phrase from a representative of a current with whose very foundations I disagree, yet whose methods reveal why people often speak of a “Sartrean Christian legacy” or of the “Nausea” that we all recognise. It is indeed often the case that illness is both escape and camouflage, carrying mutual benefits and harms. His view is that we must adopt a stance towards illness, rise above it, and give it meaning in its absurd suffering. This is broadly in line with my own position and with the Christian and Franklian stance. We are on the same path, approaching from very different directions. How *being leaps from nothingness* is sometimes beside the point in relation to the stance we must adopt. Sartre similarly — yet in mirror image — sees the vessel as being, and our crack and flash as our greatest freedom within being rather than servitude. Sartre has good methods that combine

phenomenology and existential stance — but they are abstract, whilst I regard my own as concrete, even though I am an idealist (and no utopist). His abstract struggle results even in “concrete by-products,” I would say. Very well, then: for him spirit is “freedom” and freedom is the pinnacle of the non-material, whilst I look upon spirit as **panpsychic** in character. And of course, alongside Supra-meaning and Supra-Being — as Frankl does in some respect — I am glad to have found support in at least one expert rather than only arguing against experts.

What is this about? Sartre holds that the whole of matter and being is so solid that our existence and our spirit are a crack in being — and I ask rhetorically: “If freedom is our greatest opportunity, why direct it towards rising above when suffering and illness are then fully real and final things, because they patch back that crack — and death is the final wall?” His meaning is in meaninglessness. Heidegger here would probably be more honest and say: “Let us leave meaning and simply look.” Christians say: “Suffering and the patching of this life is the necessary process of closing the wrong and sick freedom.” Pure atheists and nihilists hold: “The crack closes because it was never meant to exist.” What difference, then, in postponing the patching of that crack if we do *not enjoy* this process and this exception of freedom that we have been given? For if it were not “nausea” but joy, Sartre would be the supreme counterweight even to joyless believers.

It is in truth extraordinarily courageous of him, because it is like a driver who drives without a road — equipped as though setting out on a journey around the world. And I myself am in reality a *latent nihilist* if the existence of the eternity of our being and of God as Supra-Being is set aside — alongside which I support my thesis, and which likewise resembles a “long unclear road” that leads supposedly to paradise. I do not say I would in the opposite case have chosen a different and more meaningless life (that is a paradox) — but I would then have thrown into the water any search for meaning whatsoever. Excellent, too, is the fact that many nihilists choose truths that believers are unwilling to face. But these truths do not affect

conclusions — they confirm them, once turned around. If nothingness is a parasite on being, it is more likely the reverse: for one need not be a philosopher to see that without eternity, entropy wins. It is enough to be only a scientist.

Sartre's analysis, however, is sometimes brutally precise and correct in relation to science. To paraphrase and distil: ***MENTAL ILLNESSES ARE AN ESCAPE BY WHICH A (SUBSTANTIALLY HEALTHY) PERSON DELIBERATELY TAKES CONTROL OF THAT OVER WHICH HE HAS NONE — AND EVEN DERIVES BENEFIT FROM IT.*** Am I so very different here? Am I a grabber of power — using illnesses as a trump card behind the objective dilemmas of what actually helps me — and then my non-hypocrisy that nothing is absolute as a second trump card? It is the adoption of a stance and of responsibility, Sartre would say: *“magical and false freedom against real freedom”* — proof only of “bad faith” in the “patient.” Can a psychiatrist, then, simultaneously be an existentialist? The madman may be anything at all. Some answers, in conclusion:

› First: I, who was an opponent of mental disorders and illnesses as such, have noticed that “realities” do exist within them, even though our freedom is great, or this reality accumulates only slowly.

› Second: it is true that by losing freedom, and by the objectification or pity and treatment of myself, I lose my original freedom, my competitive standing in the labour market, the futility of my degree, and my roles. Let me put it thus: “I lose control of myself (or accept this loss) and give it to the world and the universe — and then in fact I get it back.” By Sartre's logic I even become “lonely” and “rejected” and less creative (though I have these modes). I flee both from the return to anxiety and from freedom, because full freedom would mean an excess of suffering, responsibility, work, and pain. This is proof that in his terms abstraction stands above any concrete freedom. Why? If I wish to withdraw into my “depression” or whatever it may be, and I feel well and have control — I am living, and I am free;

only paying an inner price. In the opposite case I would pay an inner and an outer price. But in that middle space I have precisely the freedom between extremes, and the possibility once again of eternal work, advance, cooperation with the system, and non-dependence on either. I can even be productive and have more trump cards for my voice to be heard than if I were sitting behind a lectern. Was that my aim? No. And there lies the value — and the paradoxical law of survival. Sartre would call that: *“you are masterfully manipulating reality!”* That would be a compliment — but also a danger, had I done it deliberately. In fact I am answering — existentially — to the manipulation of reality upon me. I have thus equalised two forces to some degree and feel completely calm: neither seen nor unseen. Limited freedom is often greater than unlimited. Sartre’s freedom rests exclusively upon his own opinion, and mine upon my experience — whilst everything else I transfer into idealism, and I do not conceal that I have no scientific proofs for my philosophy of Observation, though I later invoke certain research even so. In any case, he too holds that my opinion is simultaneously “the opinion of all humanity” and a kind of existentialist “categorical imperative.” We are therefore equal — and unequal.

ANXIETY IN THE BROADER SENSE

People fear the mad, the unknown, and the brilliant — whilst we often fear the mediocre. I would rather drink coffee all day with Sartre and agree that we disagree than spend five minutes in an administrative office. That spirit influences body is clear to both of us — but work on the body is also work on the spirit. When the body is neglected, the spirit falls as well. Frankl saw this in the camp, where shaving or washing was the only vital sign of life, meaning, and value in the day — just as my father does now, lying almost immobile in bed. And my grandmother, who let all of that go whilst old but still healthy and mobile, ultimately dragged both herself and her spirit into decline — and it is now questionable how her soul and

consciousness will fare after death. Spiritual work (on body and on spirit) is like penicillin: even though it feels a double burden, which in a sense it is. My grandmother rallied when we lifted her onto the bed and the doctors measured her heart as functioning normally — even though she had already been in a state of near-coma. Five hours before her death they were still telling her not to talk nonsense about dying, and were accusing us of neglect — not her, who had barely allowed us to change her clothes. As for time: it was precisely my grandmother who for days told us we were “attacking her without reason,” because she remembered how she “had been cheerful and active.” She had deliberately locked herself into an identity of the past and in doing so passed sentence on the present and the future. In that she had, both in Heidegger’s terms and in Christian terms, “forgotten being” and fallen only into “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*). She was not at the end a being towards death — she was *death and dying itself: living death and dead life*. Kierkegaard would have called this precisely “the killing of one’s spirit” through the loss of: “I” and “now.” Stasis is the murder of necessary dynamism, and that “despair that is not despair” (*acedia*). Even the grandfather of my half-sister killed himself when he no longer had to care at all for his immobile, bedridden wife. These are factual experiences, whilst with the philosophers we can debate the ideal problems or solutions that stand behind them.

BEING AND BEINGS

All that is external (and unrealised), in my view, exists as an “ontological minimum” and at least as “truncated information” or “potentiality” — but it **exists and is** (let this intention be understood, even if the precise concept and distinction are not yet exact). Being and anti-being exist; **non-being or nothingness do not exist**. Therefore there exists only *privation of being* that moves towards zero and minus — but never reaches them. By this I mean not only the classical privation of good but the privation, absence, and suppression — or compression — of being and life

in general. Depression is itself a kind of “compression,” whilst anxiety is excessive *decompression*.

Knowledge creates form and essence, whilst matter and potentiality exist prior to this in everything. By matter I mean everything in the broader sense, including the non-material. The hierarchy runs as follows:

- › *Supra-Being* as God, who is self-knowing and knows all else (and “creates”), is the absolute potentiality at the same time of all that lies outside or within or around Him.

- › Through *emanation* and outpouring — the degrees of being — being “flows down” from the original being onto all else (nature, the universe, Dasein, and so on). This flowing is not in time as we know it. From absolute being as the guarantor of reality we have a multitude of relative and individual “beings.” Their common denominator is Observation and knowledge. This is graduated, and my ontology is therefore **theophanic** or revelatory. When people constantly ask “Is there life on Mars?” they do not realise that they themselves have already created life and Mars, in an objective or subjective sense. Whilst this may resemble the logical fullness in which everything imagined is simultaneously real, I return here even to Hegel to say that *subjective idealism* must be strictly distinguished from *objective idealism*. I return to the inner necessity and historical weight that Hegel takes as criteria. I hold that it is not the same to think about “Martians” and about “blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh” — people woven into me and my lineage. The human lineage is not wholly dead or wholly alive if one of its members is such. The human being is not like a grape that falls off and a new one grows, whilst the mouldy grains of three years ago are no longer thought of. If they are thought of, it is only in the context of memories and comparisons of the harvest. In that case the human being is truly a means and not the end of life.

Through the anchor and cohesion of *love, will, and knowledge*, my monism of being becomes in fact **participatory**. Individual observers and co-observers are at a second level ontologically equal but graduated by the capacity and possibility of consciousness and freedom. The greater the possibility of consciousness and freedom, the greater the possibility of co-creation of essence, meaning, and knowledge through love and action. This knowledge is **dynamic** and not static. Time is only a software and a tool for the event to occur and for the essence (“mission”) to be realised or created. Static passive knowledge is the starting point — all else is the **gradation of being** and the intensity or quality of being that can know itself, others, and Supra-Being — when it comes to the human being.

Observers are not passive spectators — they are active **perceivers and creators**. They create through Observation and will, and only then through action — which does not exclude hope or faith, for this is not a philosophy of “magical power” or of the superhuman. My synthesis points towards a synergy of wills and the transformation of the plastic into the real and intentional through presence in its various dimensions. Even in this life we have multiple dimensions (dream, imagination, memory, drawing, conversation, and so on). This is a kind of phenomenological reduction with the addition of creative power. Within the vertical method we have this synthesis and this mirror. The dialogical method is structurally dualistic only in the division into the this-worldly and the otherworldly; but laws, essence, and eternity are everywhere, including here. Physiological decline is in my view an entirely irrelevant law. But essence does not decline — it returns at worst towards potentiality. Metaphysical stasis as simultaneous continuity is the otherworldly union of dynamism and stasis and of looking. Looking is not the same as merely a glance. Stasis is the beginning that has no beginning. God sees at the same time potentiality and the thing or being when we too see the same. **Eckhart** would say that we have the same eye. Our return to potentiality, or the killing of ourselves, is only an **impossible process of anti-being**. Potentiality is the first thing above zero. Every potentiality already has its own essence, but not yet its own actualisation and existence. The “super-sight” sees and creates essence and potentiality;

whilst sight and “co-sight” create fullness and *entelechy*. To be able to look, we must first begin to exist — and that is the only “violence” of Supra-Being upon us. But that violence is the necessity for us to have any stance, choice, desire, or capacity for selection at all. Even if it were possible to “return” to potentiality, still, because of all others and the network of life, the human being can never become potentiality again. My life and the writing of this book are irrevocable, indelible, and unforgettable in an ontological — and even in a psychological — sense.

ONTOLOGICAL PARADOX AS KEY, AND ON „HELL“

The human being who declines — in mind, body, spirit, or morality — creates for himself, in an ontological sense, *hell* on “both worlds.” We are here both “thrown” and similar to God at the same time — for our *essence and existence* are inseparable, and there is no longer any potentiality for us as formed beings. But here the matter and the explanation go further. Whoever wishes to “kill himself” is in fact *denying existence* and essence and wishing to move towards potentiality or nothingness — and that simply **no longer exists**, however much we protest and fail to understand. Whether hell is “others,” or us, or God, or demons, or nature — that is again a secondary question. Hell is certainly *discomfort* at every level of being. This is not only for the sake of ethical justice but on account of *the law of the spirit, soul, and body itself*. And hell is certainly above all “*within us*”, however one looks at it. The further question of why it is within us, what hell looks like, and where it is located — all of that is not important for this work, and everyone tells their own story; the ontology of dimensions is something that does not concern me here, for that is already truly a matter of pure conjecture.

Hell, in my view, consists in the fact that we wish to be *potentiality* (or indeed Supra-Being) and we cannot. We cannot be *everything* — and we

cannot be *nothing*. Here our provocation of infinity collides — the belief that we have “out-witted” it. This is the source of our anxiety, because we desire the *impossible*. Yet existence is not something bad, and the human being does not desire “the bad.” Existence broadens freedom, and being is richer the greater it is.

Animals of the lowest consciousness are closer to potentiality and to things, and they decompose towards potentiality far more easily. They cannot and do not wish to be God or the human being as we do. We frequently wish for this, and we “stretch” our freedom towards the absolute — we wish to be God, and we wish to be potentiality, and even nothingness, so as to “rest from being” or to remain in our inertia and our current mood. God cannot contradict Himself. God, in my view, is both *person and intelligence and Law* itself. The hierarchy and differences between *essences* are not within the “domain” of God’s omnipotence for Him to change at will. God’s omnipotence is understood in various ways, and there are those who even see it as limited (this I shall address later). We have proximity to the absolute and He to us, but infinity and omnipotence are within that fact and that framework. The question is not why injustice, calamities, and all the rest. The question is: why, if God is God and omnipotent, can He not create an equal God? I am not even interested in the foolishness of the “rock that God cannot lift.” Since we are *caused*, that would be a *logical impossibility*. This is why every possibility or impossibility is bound to the possibility or impossibility in another sphere. That is the best answer. He is already within us, and we in a sense within Him, but He is not us.

Here in my “philosophy” there is a subtle difference from **Heidegger**: our life or “death” is not, in the end, our *most own* thing, but our final *mutual will*. Hence perhaps the idea and the symbolism of the Trinity as a creative group: I – Thou – God. But Dasein (*Heidegger’s Dasein*) is not only “thrown” into the world and does not discover a pre-existing truth, nor is it a “servant of being” — it is an **inclusive partner in creation, though not simultaneously God**. The “image of God” is a wonderful and precise

analogy that is not an analogy. The human being, in the end, is created not by God alone, nor by the human being alone, nor by others alone (parents, environment, pets, nature...), but by **ALL**, through their *participation and Observation*. What do parents do when we are born, if not — look at us? My father looked at me and I at him from the “basket” so intently that he nearly fell down the stairs. That is where the “secret bond” is formed. This is why a being can be observed before birth and beyond death. The only question is whether the final “I” in the eternity of time will — **eternally and repeatedly refuse** the offer of the fullness of existence, or at least the return of its old dignity (if it has already been lost). When I saw my grandmother (or grandfather or others mentioned at the beginning) repeatedly refusing food, movement, advice, and love — I was not witnessing her finitude but her *infinity*. And now I am the *custodian and active participant* in their being, their return to being, and their saving — but I am not the “guarantor.” This book shows that I am not preserving and building an “image” of them and of myself — I am **building them and myself**. I am building the reader, and the reader through his own stance builds me and the book (as even Eco might almost agree). I am not leaving behind an “image” of infantility or insight or a little of everything — I *am* that, and I am becoming it.

I do for the *departed* what they did for me when I was still potentiality, dead, or a child — even if they did so unconsciously or subconsciously. I do it consciously, and that is why my bond is even stronger. For they loved me “only” when they saw me after birth and the sexual act. We do not notice the ageing of a person, and that too is a phenomenon. Yet when we look at a photograph, we are shocked. But what I remember is — love and dignity. This means we already see the spirit here more than the body, and the body is only the manifestation of a worn or damaged spirit. My being and our being is not **being-towards-death, but being-towards-eternity and eternal concordance**. The question remains of the animals that are immediately behind us in terms of consciousness, yet lack the “soul” and the capacity to know themselves, God, and others through reason — yet they influence our existence and its quality, and we influence theirs,

creating mutual trust, love, and so on, and sharing certain similarities of behaviour or “mind” and character. How to reconcile the fact that they accept and live the departure towards potentiality whilst we feel anxiety for them? As Jesus said roughly: *through faith you can move mountains...* I hold that the hierarchy of possible salvation extends there too. As God creates parents who create and save us, and we then our children, I think we can do the same with pets or animals. Once they have emerged into the essence of being, animals are no longer “anonymous” — and just as we can treat them through a veterinarian, so through love and Observation we can, through ontological tools and the guarantor that is Supra-Being as their source and creator, also “resurrect” them. So that the lamb and the lion when they “lie in paradise” have their names, and are not simply a “random” lion and lamb. I do not say that everything will be like a puzzle in an address book, for that precisely would not be the breadth of freedom and love. Rather, there exists an ontological difference between a dog as a distant dog and a specific dog who was also useful, who participated in our loves and survivals, and so on. If one says — it is unjust that some dog in the desert should be neglected (though no one says it is entirely lost, even through this idea of mine) — I *answer*: is it not more unjust that our deserving dog should disappear first? One might say: “My dog has already enjoyed life, and the stray has not.” But my dog’s right to life does not exclude that other right. At least one is “saved,” and through this reflection the door opens for the “other, the unknown, the neglected, and the abused” to also be saved. But people are known for “raising a hand” before they have even heard the question or the answer.

This is why Frankl’s ***meaning and supra-meaning*** is also a key link with *existence and essence* itself, and certainly with the beauty I compare to images. Personal meaning always remains. Parents often think they know the best meaning for their children — and afterwards either see that it is not so or accept something different. Love accepts every meaning. The greatest problem is — meaninglessness, and the disbelief that our meaning can be aligned with the Supra-meaning that is the fullness of everything.

Meaning, love, and any value-category is something that follows *after Observation and alongside Observation*. Observation and values are therefore equally inseparably connected. Who the last observer is matters not, if meaning and knowledge has touched even the last one. And if it has not — it is hidden in the ontologically last true **Human Being (God) — Christ** — as the metaphysical “guarantor” that there is no forgetting. God descended to the lower, as the human being can descend to the lower and be “like an animal,” or else draw animals and people up from the depths. But the human being cannot be *more than himself*, and none of us can be — *zero*. **That is my central thesis** — though I sometimes mention “nothingness” in that pejorative and general sense, whilst the better word is “*nil’ing*” as a process.

Into death is carried the *spiritual disposition* — both the total and the final one. It is harder to be lower than to be higher, but falling is easier. This is why *observers who see all* judge completely — they provide complete insight, and every synthesis is higher and more complete. Of course no one knows everything alone. Something is known to me, something to that person, something to the physician, something to the friends of that person, to God, and so on. But just as a person can extend a hand to one who is sinking, so too to one who is sinking spiritually. And this does not mean one has done anything more than — extended a hand of love at a critical moment. That is a very important and very brief moment. But after it, a new decision and a new way is formed. The person receives an “impulse.”

This is why even hell is a “gift” and the possibility of a gift, and not the necessary contrast of paradise — which is itself only possibility and gift. A being cannot be *forgotten and kept from forgetting* — it either still *is* or it *is not*. This is why the so-called “second death” is a “renewed decline.” And this is why a declined spirit and a declined body can no longer even see itself as before, and an observer is as necessary to it as a carer is to a baby — and as one will be to each of us one day. But it can — refuse the observer, and thereby its own form in the future.

THE THESIS OF POSITION

I find myself within some version of **Christian panentheism** (not pantheism), of a **theonomic-dialectical, holistic, personal, observational, and relational ontological monism and gradualism**. We might also call it **epistemological idealism** or **constructivism**, with ontological indeterminacy as the condition of determinacy — viewed, as it were, “Copenhagen-style.”

I **reject** the idea that evil is therefore also within God; and I justify *annihilationism* only in the case of the idea that the pain or limitation of will would be unbearable for the human being — and it never is. The “ant” in any case does not know what the human being is thinking, and neither do we know what others and God Himself are thinking.

Logos and the biblical days are not something literally “before” us — I shall speak of this later. But whereas formerly it was “being” or “God” that was forgotten, today I think it is “nothingness” that has been forgotten. Although it is omnipresent, the phenomenon and truth of nothingness — or of anxiety and “nil’ing” — has been forgotten. However much mouths are full of theological, philosophical, and psychological terms, diagnoses, and medications, human life is directed towards everything except confrontation with this most important question. Hence so many social networks, activisms, and digital techniques — as though to distance the human being from confrontation with truth. This is perhaps not conspiracy or deliberate escapism. It is not even something bad, because it affirms life and concrete progress rather than “wasting” time (which philosophy also supports) — but the radical turning of the head away from death is something that pushes trends and technocracy or materialism to infinity. All economic and political ideologies, even the most progressive, are fuelled by the human flight from the Observation of the human being, of being, or of the (perhaps possible) nothingness. Death is everywhere a cliché, and it weaves through everywhere, as do negativities, banalities, accusations, and manifestations, or even the advertising of evil and violent phenomena. But real physical and spiritual death is so hidden that few encounter it, and when that briefly happens it is not spoken of, as though under “a vow of

silence.” Simple solutions are taken: “believe, enjoy, work, or live life” — and it is precisely this that has, after forty years, brought me to the point of knowing that “I know nothing” and that I am only now waking. Even all sincere joy conceals within itself the struggle against contrast. I do not know whether I am more irritated by the “bitterness” and weeping of believers (in whatever option) or by wild rejoicing. But sincere rejoicing — as faith in the idea that evil and death can be *desacralised* (though not trivialised) — is in fact a degree that surpasses this book and gives me hope that I am, fortunately, still among the “poorer” believers and philosophers in practice. Regardless of the percentage in which we all find ourselves.

Furthermore, I make an ontological provocation: **FAITH (IN ANYTHING) IS CLOSER TO KNOWLEDGE THAN KNOWLEDGE ITSELF, BECAUSE KNOWLEDGE CREATES MORE DOUBT THAN FAITH.**

I have no wish at all to enter into the distinction and the three-fold division of *knowledge* as a broader concept, and the need for a fourth term. I have not deliberately pursued *Frankfurtian analyses* of wills of various orders (higher-lower, first-second, negation-creation), nor the dangers of *Promethean arrogance* and so on — because I think that neither science nor faith is ever an absolute, and that by “Pascal’s wager” certain things will simply be seen (or not) after death.

I mention potentiality in the context of it being and not being matter deliberately, depending on what I wish to say, and I do not now specify all the divisions and concepts around, for instance, the *new modality of being* (as in the case of human beings and the transition), or *undifferentiated being* in the case of *the decline of animals*, and so on. For these are more precise expressions but do not change my vision, and I have not “checked” them in detail. The mixing of *faith, hope, opinion, example, and knowledge* is something I equally do not wish or cannot currently separate; nor do I wish to extend the questions into other phenomena I have addressed elsewhere, or that are not in contradiction with my initial thesis here. So I both broaden and narrow the problem — but I hold that the relation towards being and life is very important for the relation towards *suicide and*

mental (psychological, neurological) *and spiritual disorders*. Dasein, tubitak, being — I sometimes perhaps do not use these evenly because I “think” the same thing, in my narrower or broader sense depending on context. When I place something in quotation marks or in italics, in bold or underlined, I actually wish either to emphasise, cite, or place it in a transferred and stronger meaning.

QUESTIONS AND THE FRAGILITY OF THE THESIS

If I return to **Parmenides** and others, and to **Levinas** in the sense of the “other face,” in the ontology of beings and “beings” we again reach a sensitive phase. If my effort towards *synthesis* and *co-creation* is as true as the struggle against the “forgetting of beings,” what happens to me when I am in sleep, in mental states, or in dementia and forgetting? Then my subjective position is heavily disrupted and falls — particularly if I persist in refusing Heidegger’s horizon of time. **Bergson** would helpfully say here that this is a matter of *withdrawal from active presence, but not a withdrawal into potentiality*. And I would add that the people we encounter and “form” in dreams are, on the other side, neither people nor potentiality but something in between — a true image and reminder against forgetting, and proof that we are in fact “awake.” It is like the subconscious within consciousness, but these are of course not real people — or only very rarely. It is like a warning light that glows whilst the engine is not running. I reject time as an objective *construct* and look upon it as subjective (by importance) — but not only our subjective, but also God’s. In doing so I arrive at the very boundary of the objective, and there I wish to remain, because the danger is that I might easily slide back towards **Sartre**.

Everyone is born and noticed already from conception or birth — the value and stance towards that being is simply different. The worst example and yet the greatest empathy was aroused in me by a mother who, out of

fear of the father's different nationality, handed over her own child to the abuse of soldiers and called it a "bastard." He is alive, of course, but carries trauma — and dignity and conscience are not violated only by all the mentioned actors but also by me as an "impartial" observer of "evil that should not have happened." I too often react instinctively, but later, calmly, I always grieve for literally everyone, because every person is invaluablely worthy and worth more than the worst brief act. Forgiveness is not an easy thing, but it is even an imperative — for them and for us. But forgiveness towards oneself and towards God is the only real problem.

Everyone who is in being or in good cannot by nature wish from the same category that it should not exist or be negative. Therefore the person who hates primarily damages his own form — though it appears that this gaze also affects the person being observed (for instance, a convicted war criminal whose characteristics our hatred "reinforces"). If it does affect in some way, I deny ontological absoluteness here. This is why the work can expand infinitely, because Observation naturally has degrees and differences. We have already said that passive Observation does not exist, but passive would not be able to do anything. Only active Observation has its *degrees*. If I lean on *monotheism and monism* in order to advance what I wish to say, we are indeed in a certain lay sense "instruments in God's hands" — but not in the way *Reinhard Heydrich* and similar imagined or intended it. And if there is truly no one and no one knows of us (a spontaneous miscarriage, for instance), it is still the creator, the source, nature, or Supra-Being that sees us. That is the entry and the exit to my thinking. This is why my arguments are not the proof of all proofs, nor do they need to be.

Our presence is *always important but not decisive*, and decisive because it is important. I cannot make of myself a saviour but only a *co-saviour* — or an instrument of His will, my own will, and the will of a third party. Although I later draw parallels between the universe as a place that would not be what it is "without us" and without Observation — even in quantum-physical and cosmological terms — I nevertheless frequently rely on

intuition. And intuition is possessed by many atheists as well. But most people at funerals say: "Such and such a person has left us..." "He was this and that." No one says: "He has vanished, returned to his *nothing* as though he had never been, and become nothingness, dust, and so on..." Even the Bible mentions dust more than we do. I doubt that this is only self-deception and *euphemism*. I even think the problem is not that *what is* cannot imagine *what is not* (the full cannot understand the hungry, but can barely imagine it if they have experienced it or at least seen it). It is also something of a farce that people often *make a farce* after funerals. But perhaps this too is some "proof" that "the living are right" and that death truly does not exist. Otherwise we close our eyes before our own nature — and we have seen above and in my own practical examples that this can sometimes be eerie and prophetic. This is why when Jesus says it is unnecessary to lament resentfully and to be at the funeral whilst there are important tasks and a path ahead — he is saying the same: "Let the dead bury their dead... God is not the God of the dead... She has chosen the better part..." I have always held that the relation before and after death matters more than a crowd at a funeral, and I have thanked people (including my grandfather and my father, with concrete public actions) *in their lifetimes*. On the other hand I have indeed seen people who bury a friend and without fear plan the murder of another friend the following month — and will themselves die in prison shortly after. That is "arrogant immortality" without awe and respect for the responsibility of life. "Death" is only an indication that life is under threat. And many think that the figure of a few more years of life is a qualitative sign of the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of that life.

I merely wish to transform Heidegger's "peak of uncertainty" into a *peak of certainty* as a way of thinking that is salvific for psychological states — even if it is *false*. And he too does not promote despair but wonder — though that wonder, on account of nothingness, may be kindling for despair rather than "the depth of the wonder of reality." Many, of course, observe as they walk.

There exists also **self-Observation**, which is often rare or appears “arrogant” and desperate. As with the “misunderstood talents and stars at whom we laugh.” They *confirm and create themselves* in their own “I.” People sometimes have a love for a craft (which is also talent) and cannot develop within it. And instead of, as I have, “throwing down the racket,” the pen, the microphone, or the glove when they reach the end, they continue in their own way. But that too is a sign of “good spirit” and of an invisible degree. I, for my part, do have a degree, and my legal spirit has not vanished — it has remained in the mutual respect, memory, and legal logic that I naturally carry with me always, since one does not graduate “by accident” — not even if one is a pure crammer.

When **Bottomore** said to my grandfather: “This is a contribution to world scholarship” — after much criticism — I read that work of his, *Ideology, Reality and Truth*. And I did not find “where exactly the significant contribution lay,” though one must take into account the time as well. Nor did the conclusions remain without questions. But it is a contribution precisely because Bottomore saw it as such and simultaneously *co-created* — my grandfather’s doctorate, his future, his methodology, his name, and the space for further work — even if, beyond the theme, the substantive question “from the beach” was never fully resolved, and all became or were doctors of science. Here too the “intuition” of the mentor is important — in terms of understanding, patience, and the future he sees in the student — as was mine in my own pupils before. I immediately knew who from secondary school would graduate, and faster than me. Those to whom I was once a teacher can today be — or could be — mine, regardless of the esteem owed. And those who were my teachers have not all “advanced” greatly after teaching me. And that is simply how it is...

THE (SELF-)DISCUSSION THAT LED TO THE THESES

The stance towards life influences the stance towards death (post-life) — of that I am convinced, and **this is my second thesis**: one so simple it is implicitly heard from ordinary people, yet is rarely “official.” Even **Schopenhauer** recognised that our tendency is always directed either **towards boredom or towards anxiety**, or away from them. The *anxiety* I experienced recently — with which I could not even work (and now, conversely, work helps me, or a change of place) — is in fact often a healthy “**awakening**” of consciousness, of the kind taught in other ways by many philosophers or spiritual guides such as **de Mello** or, in some respects, *Heidegger*. More precisely, it is not really *care* but only an *ontological alarm*. We process *presence*, but if we try not to change times, it would diminish. I shall later also warn of the excessive focus on the present — which was Vatican-contested even in A. de Mello’s case — because today everyone “flees” into Eastern ideals and peace that has no direct connection with our culture. Despite this, fatigue is great for everyone, because the authorities of childhood are disappearing, and new ones have not yet developed. We feel fulfilled but also alone or deceived. Those who “helped hold us back” are at the same time missed. I am now entering the afternoon of life and feel older than I look. Even stress rejuvenates and keeps me vital — but the feeling is strange.

This can, on the other hand, lead us into *excessive vigilance* as against other later problems of old age, about which I write elsewhere. My grandfather, for his part, would say: “I do not think about death at all.” True thinkers are perhaps *hyperactive*, taken by rumination or knowledge that led them in some cases to dissolution or burnout alongside physical illness — as with **Nietzsche**. But they did not lose their “reason” whilst still biologically healthy. My grandmother consciously neglected everything, including reading the clock — though she functioned well with her mobile phone and crossword puzzles, since concentration was fixed there. And at

my age she seemed more carefree and in better spirits than I am. One must be careful with conclusions, however. The moment she neglected in old age even the television she had adored, I knew that her “space” was shrinking — and I saw the same in myself, that it is “living dying” and “social dying.” The human being is alone with himself, but equally part of society. We do truly build society — but often before we have built ourselves to completion. Some do not manage it, and many do not wish to. Whenever my grandmother got up from bed once, she would get up easily the second time. It is the same with exercise. That is only one *modus* of ageing and illness, though a frequent one. My father, despite two serious illnesses and the change of major hyperactive habits, continued to exercise regularly and reconciled himself to watching television — and he is less despairing, sleeps less, and has “reduced” less of his life than my healthy grandmother did.

The problem of anxiety and the Observation of being and time in **Heidegger**, or the acceptance only of that philosophy, manifests itself primarily perhaps in the presupposition that *death is certain* and *the necessary other side of life* as the relation of Dasein towards its own finitude. But as a first point, we do not know the moment of death nor what death exactly is. “*Nothing can be known of death,*” say many.

Admittedly, according to some scientific evidence and the division of cells, natural death would come at around one hundred and twenty years. But anxiety is a relative concept, because some are not afraid of death whilst for others there is both too much and too little time. In many people, neurons and hormones undergo a sudden “surge” at the moment of death or clinical death — producing an image of a kind of *wellbeing*. That is stated in general terms, but the point is that I hold this to be a *manifestation of the subject’s return to the fullness of Being, and not mere chemistry*. Heidegger of course addressed this more conceptually and phenomenologically, circling somewhat around the question of *why there is something rather than nothing* in a formal sense. But apart from his good paradox that *the past comes tomorrow rather than remaining in yesterday*, he also *draws the future and the certain death* into the present state. He is truly correct

against the present as we “wildly” perceive it — but he advocates the **sanctity of the authentic present moment**, which in my view is only a *deep passivity*, because the human being — as **Frankl** says — is oriented nonetheless towards the *future*, towards a goal, or towards some positive expectation. That present is different from the “*eternal (Neo-Platonic) present*” in the otherworldly sense that I also mention (here the moments of anaesthesia, coma, and “that before” birth are interesting) — but we have not reached the question of time yet. For anxiety, time is only one component.

The moment must be lived *authentically* — that is true. But how? Not by always choosing between “higher and lower” value ambitions. And after death we pass into an eternal present or future, whilst our possibility continues being in the *union of all times*. I see *otherworldliness* as the *union* of the soul and the totality of our being (and all its bonds and reputations) that begins here — and that is one of the keys to that *qualitative compilation*. However, this is rather more of a kind of my *Christian or quasi-Christian mysticism* and personal conviction; whilst Heidegger aimed at limiting the work to what is “here and certain.” It is there that he came closest to the mark, and equally there that he erred most gravely in the final truth — unless we exclude the “pedestal-status” of biological death and life, for which he again provides no satisfying explanations. Since I hold that death is not the end of time and a wall, and that it is not the *possibility of impossibility* but the *possibility of possibility or the impossibility of impossibility*, my anxiety and bitterness do not arise from a *return to nothingness* and its expansion into the random and transient *flash* common to all “negative” philosophers, but rather from the *impossibility of nothingness but the possibility of the deterioration of the quality of existence*.

We are aware that we need not *be*, but our will goes unfortunately more towards *non-being* than towards the *wonder* of the fact that we nonetheless *are* and that *being is*. And not only that we have been — from the beginning — but perhaps actually *always*! The fact that we are not self-

creators does not mean that time had its sequence as we imagine. This is why we are in a split. *We wish to be what we are not, and we do not wish to be what we are* — this is my view. And here lies the **key to anxiety and mental illness** as well. The transcending in the active transition from the this-worldly to the otherworldly troubles me because of the fear of the *uncertain, the questioning of guilt, and the need to control everything or surrender* to worlds — yet I wish to look “beyond all of this.” My anxiety, therefore, arises because possibilities *grow* — not because they *diminish*. Time and experience grow. My soul, as **Thomas Aquinas** would say, therefore wishes to *lay in store in advance what it cannot today — tomorrow*. This is why it *contracts* and feels *pain* — because it not only does not want pain, but does not want the loss of control (and no one does), does not want the very knowledge it so longs for, and does not want such a quantity of certainty and uncertainty. It wants and does not want infinity, can and cannot possess it — and our infinity is limited within finitude, just as finitude is unlimited within infinity, I maintain. Here is a kind of transfer of the “psychology” of anxiety and depression into “philosophy” as I see it:

› **ANXIETY** (mine) is in my view correct in detecting **danger** but incorrect in detecting **destruction**. It repeatedly proves to itself that destruction does not exist, but that there is only a *return towards potentiality*. **Anxiety is — the effort in the vision that destruction exists.**

› On the other hand, people who **destroy or live life WITHOUT FEAR**, whilst **subconsciously certain that destruction does not exist**, divide in my view into four groups:

- › They are in fact deeply in being but against it.
- › They are shallowly in being and against it, because they wish to “deepen” their relation with being.
- › They are unconsciously in being, and consciously in themselves, without opposing it.
- › They are consciously and positively — both in themselves and in being!

Those who *postpone* the question of destruction or death in fact *negate* them. Those who are least philosophers may perhaps be the most so. Some are parasites and provocateurs of being, whilst others are the fullness of being or of anti-being (though not of non-being). But the absence of fear in them is in fact evidence of truth, whilst anxiety is evidence of — untruth, or of superficial truth, or of fear of truth. There exist only consequences: *action and reaction and the value-system of such consequences*. Because if anxiety were true — it would not have fear and paralysis! It would have perhaps only stage-fright.

PROOF AND PREMISES ON ANXIETY

1.) The anxious person — such as myself — thinks: *My finger will fall off...* I am afraid of that and I do not want it, because I once had that finger, or was given it, and I do not wish to lose it or to feel pain. I „predict“ certain future.

2.) The non-anxious person thinks: *It does not matter if my finger falls off; I can live without it — I was without it once, or will be again. My finger is not "me". I will not "lose" it, because its value — in this world and the next — is practically negligible and replaceable. Pain, if it exists at all, cannot be prevented in a state where I have no freedom; only where I do. Pain is transient, while anxiety hinders me for far longer. Only wakefulness and sleep save me — and those are natural states, because I was born with them, not with anxiety.*

CONCLUSION: Although knowledge is not the only thing that "liberates," the first person fuses ordinary factual information with his own value system — within a hierarchy that elevates the relative towards the absolute, but with the "*prejudice*" of the concrete meaning's power. His

truth is accurate only — *partially* — and only to himself. The second person perceives a *holistic and universal* truth and *strips anxiety of its power* — anxiety that presents itself as something *sacred*. A newborn infant experiences stress, but only briefly — and does not, strictly speaking, experience anxiety at all. Anxiety is not merely the sum of accumulated traumas; it is itself *trauma per se*. The second truth therefore does not *exclude* the first — it *complements and transforms* it. By Hegelian reckoning, the second truth does indeed **sublate** the first — not physically, but logically and psychologically. ***Aufheben: it cancels, preserves its freedom, and elevates it.*** In the end, there cannot be two truths: the whole is the truth, and the first position is merely a *perspective* — provided, of course, that truth is not something else entirely.

The solution, as nearly all schools of teaching, self-help, and faith maintain, is always the same: **letting go**. The most difficult and the easiest of processes — an oxymoron, perhaps — but the only "*narrow path*" that opens wide doors. It is likewise *Frankl's* path, one that can only be made easier by attending to small yet significant things. Suffering may persist, but it ceases to be destructive. At that point it is no longer suffering in the original sense of the word — no longer depression or paralysing fear — but only pain, which may itself be a symptom of reality or of our growth and salvation.

When I speak of a collapse of the spirit, I mean spiritual strength and the aesthetic of being — not merely the physical. This distinction matters. There are people who, like myself and certain acquaintances of mine, fall into an anaesthesia of suffering and meaninglessness through food; or, as my grandmother did, through sleep. This is not evil in itself — but in a world where God is partially absent and our nature is divided, we fall back again into inertia. The stress through which I currently maintain a lean body, despite anxiety, is an equally unnatural condition. These are all phenomena that easily confuse people. The infinity of human beings, of potential, and

of the universe is something both atheists and theists affirm today — and it is precisely here that a great reversal has taken place. We have always “*dreamed*” of the infinite whilst remaining imprisoned in finitude. Now the entire problem — regardless of what the final truth may be — is shifting into the domain of infinity as the central question: more pressing today than it was in antiquity, even as the patterns repeat themselves, and even as the taboos remain largely unspoken.

My late grandfather once told me: if you wait for great things, you will not see them soon. For the lay response to Heidegger's thesis that everything rests upon nothingness can be inverted: *nothing rests upon nothingness* — or rather, *everything rests upon everything*. If nothingness is not nothingness forever and has not always been nothingness — and by this I do not mean an imagined opposite — then even if it is merely the other half of the vessel from which being “leaps forth,” one must ask why it is not rather the case that everything is *the impossibility of possibility*. He does not know the answer, and neither shall I. But I believe it is possible that nothingness is only a *presumption and an archetype*. After all, it is now widely held that living things arise from non-living matter — that the emergence of such a universe is statistically possible — whilst I hold that statistics are, for certain phenomena, infinitely *impossible*. Heidegger returned to Being; I believe that it is only through a *return to beings* that Being itself can be fully disclosed — not through contemplation of Being alone. The observation of Being, of oneself, and of others is why every philosophical current gives birth to a new one, or resurrects an old one as its counterweight. But the aim is not a play on words — it is the search for the truest truth.

If *nothingness* (individual and general) is “beginning and end,” then it is equally the end of *history, philosophy, and theology*. More than that: whoever “annihilates” does nothing wrong in that case — he merely accelerates a truth and a dynamic that today, despite the general growth of

humanity, tilts more towards entropy. This is simply the subjective stance of a philosopher, which may or may not coincide with various proofs. Not only is the destroyer "not morally responsible" in the event of the transience of being — but anyone who desires something beyond that creates an *illusion*, an unnecessary or temporary *tension* for the sake of a *questionable meaning*, amid a clash of equal wills in which the law of mass or of the stronger most often prevails, independently of any third party's idea. That law is not the product of institutions, then. Whilst I seek to grasp *why I recognise necessity* in certain things, others regard everything as either *recognised necessity and self-destruction* — or as *absolute freedom* — within some form of theism or atheism. All answers here are merely *logical variants*.

PEOPLE, ANIMALS AND POWERS

My father, about whom I have written, is a recipient of nearly all state honours — a successful innovator, a pedagogue, and a *Pride of Croatia*. He was raised by his grandfathers, who always told him: "Be a teacher and a practitioner." I, for my part, likewise inherited a mixture of genes; pedagogy was in my blood, though less so, and it never drew me in. I felt alone in that, and would either perform authority or hide behind humour — concealing not so much my difficulty with classroom control as my other inner struggles and longings. My grandfather was a pure theorist, whilst my grandmother was a pure pedagogue. It is generally assumed that death in one's bed and among one's family is the ideal — and in that my father somehow rises above his crises — whilst my grandmother and grandfather were "impossible" both for reason and in conduct. My grandfather's greatest danger proved to be his own bed rather than any state or war: it was from it that he eventually fell and was broken. What I have noticed, however, are the subtler dimensions of psychological character formed in youth, which later develop — and which can be

compared, interestingly, with animals and one's affinity for them. I shall frequently make brief reference to the "philosophy" and psychology of animals with whom I spent a great deal of time, though not in such a way as to veer into Humean analysis.

My father admitted that he was "a cat man" — that he loved cats more than dogs. I was much the same, though I noticed I was drawn equally to dogs. In that I recognised both my own openness and my mixed nature — and I came to know the differences between the two. Cats are autonomous: guardians of the present, of wakefulness, and of existential anxiety — *realists, stoics, even nihilists or sophists*. At the same time they are immensely complex, perceptive, and resourceful. Whatever one makes of the animal mind — whether through *Hume, Hegel, Aquinas*, or others — what certain cats achieved in pursuit of their goals was nothing short of fascinating. And yet that rare but precious capacity for connection, for cohabitation, for a respect extended towards us — their smallness, elegance, and curiosity — drew my attention for years, because I could see that they possess both *breath* and "*spirit*": that is, character. In my presence, both a dog and cats collaborated easily, respecting my authority within five minutes. Why do I speak of this at all — and why do I return to the world of animals throughout?

My secondary school philosophy teacher, the late Dr **V. Batovanja** — a scholar and admirer of Heidegger, who reportedly died a violent death — and many other professors regarded me with great respect (and sometimes with disappointment), as the grandson of one of the well-known names in Croatian sociology, a professor prominent in the 1960s and 70s. She suffered, it seemed, from always being in a "lower company," as it were — whilst her colleagues saw this as a touch of arrogance, or were simply envious. What I noticed, however, was her obsession with cats. She apparently lived alone and spoke of them almost constantly, fed them, and so on. Whenever we wished to break from an oral examination, we would steer the conversation towards cats. She always said that they were beings

whom no one could help. In a city it is easier to both have and to lack empathy; in the countryside, the chaos born of uncontrolled breeding and hunger becomes unbearable — for people and animals alike. But that is another matter. Only now have I understood that her fixation arose because she too possessed that individual, contemplative, and deeper gaze upon the world. I find it somewhat limiting that her mode of observation — of Being, of Heidegger, of animals and society — was so intensely *passive*. Religious studies, by contrast, were theologically perhaps "too strong," whilst physics and certain other subjects were, perhaps, only auxiliary sciences for a technocratic society — and our shared, noble disaffection was something I felt even then. My own disaffection, it should be said, arose from the sheer need to leave school at all. She would often laugh and remark that the year would be very difficult, as we understood nothing of philosophy. Unlike sociology and logic — the only subjects in which I received a *good* or *excellent* in my third year — it was precisely in her class, or because of her, that nearly all of us received a *failing grade* in philosophy. Among those was a bus conductor who actually boasted of it, as though it elevated the "value" of philosophy as a discipline. His social and broader intelligence was obscure and self-contradictory. Yet I noticed in him ten per cent of genuine humanity when he offered me a remark that was simple, almost rustic, yet philosophically quite astute: "*Do not ask for more than you first offer — offer more than you give.*" Even in a bureaucrat one may find at least five per cent of unfeigned humanity. But that five per cent is, in fact, a discovery and an experiment. And such unintentional experiments are the only truly possible ones in the social sciences and in human relations — when we lack a laboratory. Together with the articles we can all download.

Cats, then, are generally nervous — because they are "right" and misunderstood, suffocated by a multitude of "secondary rules" and competition. I am sometimes like that, as is my father. He believed that the perpetual *struggle* for justice was the possibility of absolute victory — and equally of a critical *self-control*. My mother is different in this: she sees that the circle never closes, and so she is technically "illiterate" in that sense —

yet spiritually she seeks, and sometimes wanders, through the wilderness of natural and inner freedom, away from suffocation.

Dogs — including my own — are those who look *upward*. A dog seeks *divinity* — even in me — whilst a cat believes that divinity resides within itself. The dog is the eternal optimist; the cat, a realist and a pessimist. This is perhaps why I have noticed that cats more often torment dogs than the reverse. I find this endearing, yet I recognise within myself the same division — both genetic and formed. The dialectical position of a being higher than both dog and cat — the human being — is the most thankless, yet also the richest. This is why people "govern nature"; yet due to mortality and bodily instinct, we all enter the same "kind" in this world — and nature either governs us without our awareness, or we have further corrupted it. That is a now-frequent debate around climate questions, though it is not essential here.

As for **cats**, I also observed that not all of them are alike in their existential contemplation of the world. I knew cats ranging from the *stoic* — Snježko, who "knew" my intention and love, but also my objective absence — to those who were *nihilists and tragedians*, such as Cicko, who had witnessed the process of extinction and disappearance in the household. Our occasional returns created in him only *bewilderment and depressive confusion* — a locked perception of the image of being and non-being. And there was a third: the "*Supercat*," who for exactly twenty years knew the rules of life and of our comings and goings, of the behaviour of nature, people, and animals alike — without any questioning or resistance to reality. Through *acceptance and knowledge* she outlived everyone and maintained order, troubling herself not at all about *non-being* or anti-being. She had fear in the end, of course — as do even the greatest minds. But she was a *peaceable metaphysician*; and the gathering and coherence of all of us — different beings — at the sea for a brief time — was my life's *kairos*. It signified harmony among beings: a dog, a cat and her kittens, a man, a

child, and a woman. It occurred in a brief experience of perfect, conflictless complementarity. The encounter lasted a short time — but it *happened*.

(ANTI-)HEGELIANISM: FURTHER NOTES, AND A BRIEF SURVEY OF PHILOSOPHICAL POSITIONS ON SUICIDE

What troubles me in Hegel — beyond the perennial absence of the Enlightenment's perfect rational foundation for the state — is, once again, this. Temporal pluralism and antitheses merely remind us that the entire dynamic is in fact only a subjective sum of static moments and rises or falls, much like the photographs of my grandmother that I have included in the book. If we map his Spirit of society and our universal immanence with God, why not apply the same principle to the spirit of the individual? If we examine individual photographs of my grandmother and grandfather — from any angle, whether aesthetic, rational, political, or ethical — we find a multitude of fragmented and even contradictory positions. Rather than synthesis, it is the *antithesis* that reaches its culmination at the end of life.

Frankl too, as I understand him, writes of this "sum of static images," and holds that each of them carries *meaning* — meaning that is either given, discovered, or shaped. The principal question is: which meaning, in the end? It is not even a question of whether my meaning exists or whether it is false — but whether the film and the totality of meaning become visible only at the close, and whether the final image is the most important, or merely the most shockingly decisive. Images produce a partial scandal, but are in fact only statistical data — data whose value is either a product of the immanent, or of our own sense of it. Hegel views things in a straight line — not even pyramidally, but in a single direction — whilst things do not always unfold that way. And more than that: he presumptuously fuses everything into a single Spirit, whilst I, even with the separation of connected-yet-not-merged spirits, cannot explain

each one fully and individually. Indeed, spirit is in itself as unprovable as will. A *similar or identical substance* of spirits does not entail substantiality without differentiation. The fact that another's pain or sin "pains" me is neither mere empathy nor an identity of spirits — it is a *relationality* with the same source. The question is not how God contains evil within Himself, but how God contains gods within Himself. He does not — rather, He contains gods, or images of God, within and beyond Himself. We, as "gods," are in God — and He partially in us — but not within His substance; rather, within His "*terrain*": His sub-substance and extension, His product — whether we call it *word, power, energy, emanation, ray, or playground*, depending on which expression proves most precise.

Hegel holds that we *ascend towards the Absolute*, whilst in my view it is the *Absolute that descends towards us*. The Absolute as a higher and broader concept — whether empty or filled without us — has meaning only if it eliminates nothingness as a possibility altogether, or *sublimates* it. His abstraction in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* can only be a wish and a futile resistance to the chaos of the world if, in the dialectic of the subjective and the objective, one proceeds so far in that direction. **Everything rational is actual — but is everything actual always rational?** Here I separate the concept of *reality* — and I am not on the wrong foot. I mean precisely ordinary things (a pebble falling on one's head) — do they exist in the mind? According to Hegel, no; according to me, yes. In my view, the *actual is equally real* — that is to say, equally *rational*. We shall return later to the similarity of this thesis with *biocentrism* and that genuinely virtual reality. Although I have not always agreed with Kant — including in my work on capital punishment — I return here to the thought that the world "out there" exists, but only partially, and only because of the "observation" of the Supra-Being, should no human being exist at all.

The *ancient* and *Stoic* philosophers regarded suicide in any form as rational — though **Plato** did not, nor did **Aristotle** or **Kant**. *Christian* theologians were still less accepting of it. **Hume**, as an atheist, viewed it neutrally. *Nihilists* were divided on the matter — some pessimistically so

("pointless, but not immoral on that account"), with some seeing it as even victorious and, at times, courageous. **Nietzsche** certainly did not regard it as an *affirmation* of life — though certainly as an affirmation of choice and consistency, and perhaps as one more form of resistance to the herd. *Existentialists* — as well as various "hybrids" — tended to view it as a loss of freedom, and frequently conflated personal choice with a questionable general value system. **Philipp Mainländer** was in fact among the very few — along with, in a certain sense, **Sartre** — to hold that the cessation and disappearance of being constituted the "highest expression" of human will or redemption.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ **Philipp Mainländer** (1841–1876), born Philipp Batz, adopted his pen name from his hometown of Offenbach am Main. His chief work, *Die Philosophie der Erlösung* (*The Philosophy of Redemption*, 1876) argues that the will-to-live is in truth a will-to-die: God "died" by shattering Himself into the multiplicity of individual beings, and each being carries within it the impulse towards dissolution. Non-existence is therefore not tragedy but *peace*; the tragedy is life itself, endured on the way there. Where Schopenhauer holds that the will survives the body and that suicide therefore solves nothing — prescribing asceticism as the only genuine negation — Mainländer drives the same premises to their terminus: suicide is the logical completion of the process, not an error, and beyond extinction nothing remains. Nietzsche, who read Mainländer as a young man with fascination and later with contempt, attempted to join and invert both pessimisms into affirmation through *amor fati* and the eternal recurrence. To my mind, this pulls too strongly towards a pessimistic optimism of the Sartrean kind — the wish to bake good bread from wet dough. Whether Nietzsche himself ever *lived* this *amor fati* is an enigma he left unresolved: he never, to our knowledge, answered in the first person whether he would will the eternal recurrence of his own existence. Given his collapse in Turin in January 1889 — weeping over a flogged horse, then signing letters "the Crucified" and "Dionysus" — and given eleven subsequent years of silence, one may ask whether the concept of the Superman found no Superman to embody it at its hour of need. If one accepts the premises of Schopenhauer or Mainländer — that God has dissolved into a fallen world — then Mainländer was the most concrete and, in a certain dark sense, the most honest of the three in his relation to nothingness: he neither dressed it in unverified affirmation nor prescribed ascetic distance, but acted on the logic he had written. I do not share his conclusions — but within the internal logic of radical pessimism, his consistency commands a respect the other two cannot claim with equal candour. On the day the first copies arrived from the printer, he stacked them into a pile, stood upon them —

Kierkegaard viewed *suicide* as a spiritual act born of "despair" and a desire to be someone other than oneself — which I would call the anti-Sartre, and yet remarkably similar in its reading of the psychology involved. The finest philosophers are those who were also practitioners, experiential thinkers. My grandmother refused a new dimension of herself — but even **Schopenhauer** would say that this *negation of will* is in truth a killing of the body's effort or needs — not of the will-to-live. He advocates *asceticism* as a kind of negative self-renunciation of drives or desires — in contrast to the radical positive asceticism of certain Christians. Christians do not lack drives — they have them in greatest abundance, with the highest desire of all, though often the greatest disappointments or the most extreme flight from themselves, which is either the greatest delusion or the greatest truth about sin. Some, like **Cioran**, even hold that the very *possibility of suicide* saves us from it — by giving us the sense of control and choice where we otherwise have almost none. The debates around euthanasia, meanwhile, are perennial.

symbolically elevating himself above his completed work — and hanged himself. He was thirty-four years old.

POSITIVE MATRIX — OBSERVATION AS THE KEY TO MY THESES

BIOCENTRISM AS MY LEVER AND LIFELINE — NOTHINGNESS AS THE ABSENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Theories of illusion are familiar as the other extreme from the material world — especially when seen through the lens of the "negative" Matrix. The *solipsist* holds that everything exists only in the mind. This, equally, is untrue — **it exists both in the mind and in reality** (regardless of whether we are "asleep"). Physical and metaphysical reality, in my view, exists in essence as *terrain, possibility, potential, and actualisation* — within the infinite fullness of possibility. Consciousness is indestructible, just as energy is. **Plotinus, Leibniz, and Chardin** are partially aligned with my vision here — or rather, a combination of **Leibniz and Chardin** alongside them. Of Leibniz, notably, what fits into the present argument is not his monadology as a whole, but specifically his insight that each individual entity contains within itself an *irreducible perspective* — a point of view that is constitutive of reality rather than merely reflective of it. Chardin's evolutionary theology adds to this the idea of consciousness as a real ontological force moving towards what he termed the *Omega Point*: a convergence of being, consciousness, and divinity. Both are taken selectively here. Yet whilst all of us seek what the true truth is — truth is happening. This is precisely why all of this falls under what Heidegger would call "idle talk." What Hegel and the pure pantheists lack, in my view, is *hierarchy — depth, breadth, and height*, rather than any single one of these alone. And what the materialists and nihilists lack is, evidently, *order and meaning*.

The electron or particle is, in a sense even by **Aristotle's** lights, *potency*: a sum of possibilities, existence without fixed properties, chaos without order. Later, the Nobel laureate **Werner Heisenberg**, around 1927,

established and demonstrated that the (physical) electron has no simultaneously precise *position and momentum*, because it is indeterminate — until the moment of interaction with an observer and a measurer. The *uncertainty relation* fits perfectly within a *RELATIVITY* that is in the service of *ORDER and ABSOLUTENESS*. It is like an event or a raw *reality* that receives its form only in the conjunction of *subject and object* — or of subject alone — that is, in the union of subjectivity and objectivity. The wave is dispersed and *collapses* into a point only when observed. Position and momentum cannot be simultaneously measured with precision. What, for instance, is a human decision — behind which there must be some neurological or spiritual processor? How does one define a human decision that everyone knows to exist, yet which is neither tangible, provable, nor predictable — unless one presumes we are mathematical robots, and that is yet another illusion.

This *mathematical and quantum-physical experiment* has found its continuation in modern tendencies that place matter ever more firmly in the *service of mind*, rather than the reverse. Although philosophers have long drawn on biology for their arguments — from **David Bohm** and **Roger Penrose** onwards — it is, in fact, the natural scientists themselves who remain more sceptical of this analogy than the philosophers.

„LANZA“ AND MY CONCEPTION OF THE HUMAN BEING AS “BEING-TOWARDS-THE-POTENTIAL-OF-NOTHINGNESS”

Robert Lanza (b. 1956), a scientist who took a step further and introduced **biocentrism**, shifted the mathematical and epistemological premises of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle in an *ontological* direction. Although this has not yet been accepted as an absolute conclusion or postulate, the theory goes well beyond mere speculation. Consciousness, in Lanza's account, is what *actively creates* reality — and not the other way around. As for form, and thereby essence — it constitutes itself through the

eyes of the observer. Not, that is, *in* the eyes of the beholder — but *through* the eyes, and *by means of* the eyes. **The universe exists because of consciousness, and not the reverse.** It exists as such, and at all. It does not matter, therefore, how many universes exist or how long this one will last. Time is entirely irrelevant — it is not included in these or other formulae at all. This matters later for my refutation of Heidegger's idea about the necessary connection between *time, Being, and nothingness* — a theme to which I shall return, along with Einstein, in a later chapter.

The *double-slit experiment* suggests that a particle does not even "pass through" whilst we are not watching it.⁵⁷ This may align, perhaps, with Jesus' vision that if we truly believe in something, we bring it into being. The problem is that what we most believe in — most often — is *nothingness*, even though many live under the illusion that *the question of nothingness does not exist*, or conversely under the illusion that *nothingness is certainly there*. But since everything has at least *possibility* and a *dynamic potential* before and after us — it follows again that everything exists. For potentiality is not nothingness in the literal sense of the word. Time, therefore — by Lanza, Heisenberg, and others — is a **CONSTRUCT AND TOOL OF THE MIND**, not a dependency or necessary component of occurrence. Time practically disappears and changes, as does "truth" — but observation becomes the key to understanding and **CREATING** truth. To state this more precisely, in terms I have not the „patience“ to introduce here one by one: ***Our freedom is relative, evolutionary, and vast — within a dynamic, independent, expansive, and indeed relative determinism, created by an absolute Supra-Being. This constitutes at once an absolute principle with a relative content in its limited and infinite depth, breadth,***

⁵⁷ The double-slit experiment, first performed in its quantum form by G. I. Taylor (1909) and later refined through electron and photon variants (cf. C. Jönsson, 1961; A. Aspect et al., 1982), demonstrates that particles behave as waves when unobserved but collapse to a definite position upon measurement — a result that has never been experimentally refuted. For the philosophical extrapolation towards consciousness and reality-formation, see Robert Lanza and Bob Berman, *Biocentrism* (BenBella Books, 2009), and the extended argument in *Beyond Biocentrism* (2016).

and height. Logical errors or possibilities are, in fact, my **kenosis**. Intuition and lay logic serve only to persuade the limited mind — through my own limited mind — of one variant of truth as the identity of object and cognition, thought, or conviction.

This becomes the key to the formation and shaping of life and of persons. Thus: **Newton** is right, and so is **Kant** — a stone truly exists independently of us. *But it is not a "stone" until it is with us.* And it does not depend on us alone. If the human being is also a being-for-itself and in-itself, that too is a contradictory truth that holds good however we interpret it. My synthesis is *free, proactive, and affirmative* — but equally *necessary* in the lives of those who were part of mine, if they have not disappeared forever. Our individual consciousnesses, however, are transient and insufficient. There must exist a *Supra-consciousness*; otherwise we are once again thrown back on ourselves, saving ourselves and one another. Why? Because the ontological *enchanted circle* of Nietzsche eventually transforms — perhaps physically — into an end in which the last observer loses then even the essential and axiological information of everything that preceded him. At that point he can no longer draw from nothingness what he may have been objectively creating until then. Thus I do not transform the memory of the *essence and existence and aesthetics and ethics* of my parents, my grandmother, and my grandfather into a dead letter on paper and into their "image."

My grandfather was wrong when he said that he "lives" as long as his books or I live. For even they are neither eternal nor as widely read as fifty years ago — and he is not his books. Nor is he his theses. They are only the best — or perhaps the worst and most confused — part of him: a portion of his legacy or reputation or achievement. But I and all individual consciousnesses are insufficient to preserve his being. There must also exist a consciousness that is eternal — and that is either his own, or God's. In which case it is equally ours. This *accumulation and relation of consciousnesses* — as **my central thesis about what constitutes the person and their fullness** — cannot end "with me." I must be either a part of it and

one of its syntheses, or merely an extension and an end (or one of the ends). Therefore, I do not *draw them out of nothingness* — I *hold them away from* nothingness: away from self-delusion, and as a reminder that we are not self-created, and that there exists the *conceptual* possibility that we might not have existed at all, or might not exist. The mere fact that we exist now is itself a miracle. What is missing in all of this is only a single "yes." And for that "yes" — an illumination of soul and mind is required.

Thus: without me as observer — and as co-being that goes further than the observer alone — and without God and other observers, they are not even *objects*. In that case they are not "nothing", or they observe themselves — but with an **INCOMPLETE CONSCIOUSNESS**, because they are dying and being deformed. I know that even when drunk I have consciousness. But when one is seriously ill, malevolent, or distracted, consciousness genuinely changes or narrows. We must here distinguish one thing. People in paradise — past or future — possess *full consciousness of Being and of beings*. But this does not mean they possess *all knowledge*. Our mind and spirit do not each possess, individually, God's knowledge of every matter. We acquire and revise that knowledge along the way — as we do here — and it brings us joy. Our knowledge and spirit advance most fully when they are *real*: when they return, that is, towards a positive zero. Regardless of questions about bilocation, bi-temporality, and all the rest — what matters more to a person in this life, and all the more in the next, is *encounter, love, care, and spiritual gift* — not the observation of colours and cherries. It is then that our spirit truly creates synthesis: though it is more like the return of light into a battery — which we observe as some great rising from the dark. We are a sum of individuals; but people who have died or are living are not a "mass" in Le Bon's sense — they are a *gathering*. Mass may carry its own laws or sociological manifestations and phenomena; but society does not create rules for either individuals or groups. Rather, individuals — consciously or unconsciously — create and either confirm or violate rules for individuals and for collectives of individuals. Some five hundred people per year — the Croatian average — did not arrange to meet in one place and take their lives simultaneously

because their "hour had come." That is a delusion — albeit a powerfully attractive, interesting, and research-worthy one. It is because, like an automobile, we share similar settings — not similar fates. That similarity is not identity, and the percentage of people in similar conditions is not always fixed in its outcome. The psychology of the mass is, in my view, only the "released" psychology of the individual. And even within that mass I do not feel myself part of the mass — I am conscious of how I am being watched, of how I ought to behave, and so on. In a photograph we appear "unified" because we share the same values, flags, or raised hands.

The human being, then, stands on the great boundary of *being God* — *yet not being God*. This is proof that we have everything in the letter "I" — except the dot above it. The existentialist and nihilist philosophy, by contrast, holds that we have nothing of that letter — and that whilst we "accidentally" possess it, we clutch it desperately so as not to drop it forever — but only a little later forever. The only question is: *is my own thinking and existence also a product of chance?* Geopolitics, too, often creates "accidental" conditions for the small. But when I see that it is only now — in my present moment, in fact in my future — that the meaning of my life and my affirmation of it has been confirmed, after these crises; and that only now do I say YES to life and undo my former NO. This shows that we are interpreting a book we have not yet read.

I must therefore be more precise when it comes to animals in relation to human beings. I *draw certain animals out of the potential of nothingness and of the return to it* — for it is "easier" to return to being once one has already been — whilst I *hold human beings away from* nothingness, away from annihilation (insofar as I wish to do so, and in relative measure). Death is not the problem — dying is. The problem is not life after death, but life and death *before* death — or before whatever comes after.

No human being has ever looked me in the eyes and asked on the threshold of death: *"Will you save me?"* But an animal has — specifically a cat: those very "chief guardians of nothingness," the atheistic stoics. I felt it in the gaze. And I was not the only one in the village. Why? Because cats, in

truth, **doubt nothingness** throughout their entire lives. How else did they come to be here at all? Whilst we reason about philosophy — they *feel* it. This is my connection with them — and with the late Dr Batovanja, with whom I am now equally in a dialogue: living, not posthumous.

The **cat** stands on the boundary of being and nothingness; whilst we stand on the boundary of being and God — that is, of being and *being-towards-the-potential-of-nothingness* (analogous, yet distinct from, Heidegger's *Sein-zum-Tode*, being-towards-death) *during the process of dying*. We are therefore not *being-towards-death*, but being *towards the possibility of death and nothingness*. And I hold this possibility to be fictitious — yet painful, on account of the process of inertia, degradation, and disintegration or deformation of the personality. It is a possibility that never "actualises" — it exists eternally in the anguish of being what is ordered and what is disordered. That alone is death. Animals, for their part, move towards nothingness — or towards that potential — at a far greater speed, because they are not *mind* as we are, but only *similar to mind*. They possess what I too often have more of than formal knowledge — and what is regarded as a deficit: *instinct for truth, contemplation, bare observation, and experience* — but they lack equally the *power and control over being*. We do not possess these fully either.

Animals are not (all) essential — nor are they inessential. But one or a thousand mosquitoes are not a necessity, whilst a single human being is a value beyond price, due to his depth or gift in Observation and „receiving“ through it. We can change our „spiritual eternal attitude“ due to it. But in animals we see an uncorrupted being — though lower than ourselves — and this is perhaps why we sometimes feel more empathy towards them than towards our fellow human beings. My grandfather, from a sense of his son's rejection, wrote a false will and accusation — and in doing so annulled his own ideals and deeds. My grandmother was guilty of something similar, as can be seen in that photograph. The photograph taken immediately after death reveals **pain** — not merely physical pain, but precisely that spiritual pain (not yet, or not at all, the pain of the soul). She was already absent and

unconscious — of both this world and the next — before death came. This is not only dementia, as they say — it is also a spiritual lethargy that she herself acknowledged. She had wanted to *become death*. She said so more than once — remarking that she had lived too long, beyond her time. She had the right to that choice; but her life in its totality contradicts it. She is not the *purity* of that desire. We construct a legal basis for a non-existent Leviathan — pure death. In all things the question is only one of form. There exists only the *entropic* descent towards zero, rather than an ascent towards a *positive zero* and beyond.

THE PROCESS OF PROOF AND THE RELATIONALITY OF TRUTH

The point here is this: I have not set a thesis and then proceeded to prove it — or to prove someone else's. I demonstrate or at least indicate a thesis, and then set it. The introduction was, in effect, the conclusion. I did not have proofs that I developed in parallel with an idea and a thesis, nor did I seek proofs and a thesis. I "find" proofs that support my thesis and give me enthusiasm. I prove what *is* — or at least what has an equal possibility of being. I do not *violate* science with a multitude of citations, methodological formulae, the desire for advancement, or intellectual theft. I do not work out of boredom, concealed self-justification, or false unselfishness. On the contrary: I expose myself to the possibility of discrediting myself, my grandfather, and everything I "represent." But I accept that risk — no longer out of bitterness, but from the joyful *kairos* that science, philosophy, and meaning are not in the service of themselves, nor of us, nor are we in their service. They are in the service of an answer to the question: "What is truth?" The only question in the Bible to which Nietzsche grants philosophical value. What matters here is not what truth *is* or who it is and why — but *what kind of thing truth is*. In my view, truth has

not only deep and broad value but hierarchical and dialectical — even trialectic — value as well.

The quarrel between my grandfather and the eminent professor **Karl Heinz Volkmann-Schluck** lay in this: they were competing in a contest between *relative and absolute* truth. It was a battle my grandfather spent his whole life trying to "win" — in favour of an *absolute and value-neutral* truth — although Volkmann-Schluck was not blind to the fact that relative truth is "everyone's" and irrefutable. Yet it was precisely *relationalism* that my grandfather identified even in **Karl Mannheim**, through whom he wished to confirm his own thesis. Although I hold that both were right and both erred — that truth has dimensions rather than conflict and contradiction, and that it *sublimates and complements itself with the higher and broader rather than excluding* — I find it greatly to Volkmann-Schluck's credit that he lifted the question of truth out of the sociological sphere and restored it to the philosophical. The thesis: "*Tell me your class and your era, and I will tell you your truth*" — corresponds perfectly to a certain logic, above all the logic of "the world" and of ourselves. Human beings are supreme beings of calculation. But the problem is that time *disappears* — it is not the decisive measure — and neither, ultimately, are social classes. My truth of today is not the same as that of fifteen years ago. It is not more valuable — but it is more complete and, I hope, higher. My truth is my own and independently-dependent — but it cannot be the *same* in quality, nor in subjective and objective value, as it was then. In this both my grandfather and Volkmann-Schluck were right. Only my grandfather's intention was more radical in ambition, while Volkmann-Schluck's was more radical in nature. But my grandfather had not formulated it in this way — he wrestled and entangled himself in it. Because the question here is not *what* is identical in the object, nor *when* something is identical. The question is — **what is the object** (or object and subject, subject and subject, and so on)? The answer is: *what we see — or even wish — it to be*. What the observer *wills* and simultaneously *must* it to be in its essence and purpose. What

observers — as individual, quantitative, qualitative, and hierarchical categories — will and create from it.

People often told me that a fourteen-year age difference was too much and that my wife was too old for me. They did not ask whether we were suited to one another. But I do not blame them. "Love is truly in the eye of the beholder" — not because we love each other "from within," or because I am consoling myself, or because she looks younger and I already have grey hairs — but because she *is* younger. If she appears younger, then she is younger. I do not perceive or feel a significant difference in (sexual) terms from when I was twenty-three and my former wife or partner was twenty-two. The body and years matter — but they are not the most important thing. I see no difference, and so there is none. I accept other perspectives as real — but love either exists or it does not. If it did not exist, I would not pretend or merely exploit the position. Before, I even thought I would have to "hide" or feel ashamed — and that has passed. Some people deliberately choose older partners; some consider them more mature or less anxious. My view is this: the higher truth **ALWAYS** sublimates the lower but permits it to exist — it does **NOT EXCLUDE** it. Only after almost half a century of life have I seen that it is precisely on the boundary of death and life that the *ambivalence of worlds and truths* becomes visible. The truth that life is perspectival, engaging, and beautiful *coexists* with the truth that questions of death, ageing, maturity, and evil are approaching. When I see the young who carry an old spirit, and the reverse; the healthy who are sick, and the reverse; and people who fall below the level of animals, and animals who strive to rise to almost a human level — I understand how *formalism* is both rigid and fatal for life, though it sometimes appears to be the necessary precondition for the acquisition of experience, synthesis, and proof. We who are *partially finite beings* — have an infinite will.

**"I NEED SEX" — "NO, YOU NEED A STABLE RELATIONSHIP" — AND ON
ORTEGA Y GASSET**

The above is a quotation from a lively dispute I had with a respected psychiatrist and doctor of science and medicine. When I was in the period between marriages, I was lowering my standards, as it were — I wanted only friendship or physical closeness whilst I waited to see further ahead, even though those drives were perhaps pulling me towards something higher as well. At the time I did not want that higher thing — I had not yet recovered from or accepted the change of principle of indissolubility, or the inconsistency. But I had not closed the door to other possibilities if they came "from above." She, however, insisted that I needed something "higher and broader" immediately — a lasting relationship. How was I, with psychological difficulties, unemployed and divorced, in an already bewildered world, supposed to achieve that? I was diminishing myself and felt that even that little was being taken from me in the name of something "higher" or an uncertain future. A tension arose that nearly developed into a clash of power — and in a power struggle between patient and institution, we know who tends to come off worse, and with reason. The conflict was averted, however. The students attending the session likewise thought I was desperate and negative — and I refuted that before I had even heard it. Because both truths, from that perspective and ignorance, were correct. Indeed, her truth was more correct, higher, and broader — for shortly afterwards I entered the broader concept: a new marriage that entails far more, and I realised almost all those longings in a short space of time. The problem here is that even the finest expert or human being runs into the difficulty of *imposing truth*: something I too tried to do with my grandmother or grandfather in various ways. And yet — how does one acknowledge to another that they are right, when they are only partially so? Here, of course, a calm synthesis would have been needed — before the synthesis itself. A peaceful acceptance of all possibilities and a release of the will to its source, allowing life to *happen*. That is easy to say; but both

wills must at least physically yield — and not end as my grandfather and Volkmann-Schluck ended, waiting for "arbiters" such as Volkmann-Schluck's wife. Though that very impulsiveness and passion is an interesting and stimulating quality whilst energy lasts. People see only the argument and not everything that precedes it — which is often precisely *correct* — and everything that follows it. This is why people are "needlessly conflictual beings," I would say. In hundreds of similar situations, what clashed was rarely *falsehood and truth*, or the irrational and the rational — but only the rational and the *insufficiently rational*. There lies the tragedy and the hope of humanity. My aim is to help arrive at shared, or at least truer, truths. We can and do participate in that process — from whichever side of the lectern or the table we find ourselves. That is where emotional and social intelligence enter — though those are secondary considerations for now.

I had a "clash" with another former professor over a paper she graded problematically, citing spelling errors. I was offended because she had not seen the content and the essence; she was offended because I had challenged her right to correct or comment on a composition in her own way — and because I was younger, or impertinent. Both of us were right — and the result was nothing. So too does a (different) reader participate differently in the process.

By way of conclusion to this chapter — and as a prelude to the discussion — I am glad that Lanza recognised, to some degree, a *real* rather than merely conceptual cyclicity or causality. Nietzsche and Hegel remained within the abstract — and the abstract is only part of reality; it is not its opposite, but again, *incomplete* and unrealised. The combination is ideal. A car runs only because it is a combination of elements. But those elements function in other cars and other systems as well.

Suicidality — the book's central theme — strikes me increasingly as a **boundless entry into oneself**. Existential dualism is not merely a fiction or an additional problem — it is the unravelling of the human knot, and a surrender to others. Teamwork cannot exist without the individual, and the

reverse — in order to be stronger and more complete, not through the violence of a higher "architect."

Cyclicity — whether conceptual or real — is often viewed in purely historical terms, as by the thinker **José Ortega y Gasset** (1883–1955), whose work I have kept close throughout this chapter. Through his *perspectivism* and the concept of *circumstance* as "our personal necessity within the historical cycle" of crises and trends, he introduced a certain *ratio-vitalism*, in which being "thrown into the world" is both an action and a task assigned to generations in the drama of life. He observes the relation to faith as moving from absolute obedience, through emancipation after the Middle Ages, to a renewed inability to find peace — in which the individual, in their freedom, *returns to the absolute*: something we see even today among younger generations. This is no longer a matter of compulsion — it is our "flight," and a new form of *ressentiment*, or perhaps a flight into joy. Either way, it remains — at least in most cases — a flight. He is therefore also a precursor of existentialism, though he deliberately holds himself *between* Sartre and Christianity, finding his model in **Galileo** and the *Renaissance* (as he explains at least in his book *Man and Crisis*). Yet whilst he rejects the resolution of emptiness through flight into the *transcendent*, even he would value "life in this world but not of this world": work on both the this-worldly and the other-worldly, on the material and the spiritual — wherever that spiritual may be found. The human task is genuinely *in this world*, assigned by God or by the abyss — but abstraction is part of the material world and the mind, not something isolated and remote. The most vital form of faith, in his view, is precisely *work in this world*. But the only thing in which we all differ is not method — it is the *aim, nature, and cause* of disorder in the world.

CONTINGENCY

Throughout my life I have wondered whether everything — even within "my own" theory — is ultimately contingency. I often concluded that it is incomplete consciousness that unjustly torments us. I even thought that someone who suffers as a child, or is not born, or is "aborted," might in fact be saved from their own "evil realisation" — from later suicide, harm, or misfortune arising through various forms of anxiety. Anxiety has been one of my own obsessions.

Here is an interesting reflection of mine — perhaps an ironic proof that the longer an argument runs, the more it converges upon a certain positive totalitarian figure whose rule ended less than a hundred years ago. Because of everything set out above, I had come to think that "killing **Hitler**" — for example — would be a rescue not only of other people (as others commonly suppose), or perhaps of the war itself, but of him, and of Germany at that time. Could a person *sacrifice their own soul* in order to save him and others — if that were possible? That is a more important question than Nietzsche's: "*Would you relive your entire life and all its sufferings again?*" One criminal said at the time: "I know I am going to hell — but I am going for this and that reason."

Thus, the worst decision is ontologically (not ethically) *good*, because it is a decision — firm, clear — and opens further the gates of causality and freedom. (Here is that concept of God who will not spit out the hot or the cold, but only the lukewarm.) How else would God or Being permit evil systems, when we cannot even influence the price of fuel or our household consumption? I doubt this is a matter of karma or chance. Nor, in the case of natural evil, does it seem to be a matter of necessary prevention of greater evil, of proof that the system is free and tolerates error, or that the body is transient.

Rather: the gift of a (long and difficult or evil) earthly life is in fact a greater *mercy and opportunity* than being "absorbed in time" whilst still short-legged. We can **realise ourselves in greater fullness** than the one who is not born or immediately passes to another world. Our world is connected — but it also lasts longer, and is later fuller, more meaningful, and only then higher or lower. The hierarchy here is not simply better–worse, higher–lower, more or less profitable, pleasure–pain: these are material categories through which our spiritual part also lives. A person who was not fully formed, yet immediately saw "truth" and received peace, paradise, being, or God and purification — is not "happier" for having been spared. They are even, in a sense, "shortchanged" of the opportunity. One may look again at justice and the possibility of the fall from paradise. But the person who was fully formed **in evil** — say, irreversibly — has made greater use of freedom and life than the former. And the person who was wounded or who spiritually renews themselves — because all "wounds pass" — or who loses physically what we all anyway lose — bodily life ("only", as Jesus himself would confirm) — the soul would rather choose that than a more comfortable but less fulfilled life. It is happier — but not more joyful. For it can never again desire the lower — just as the fuller can never desire the emptier. This also converges with the thought that every spiritual death, every hell, everything of that kind, is in its depths *our own choice*. Although diminished — by nature, circumstance, genes, and certain predispositions — it remains infinitely free, and therefore progressively weightier to our consciousness. It is exclusively our will that directs that infinity towards the lower or the higher. Would a free human being desire less freedom? Here we see that our objections are misplaced — and even our image of external enemies and the world. **Frankl** agrees with this: as he writes in several places — the choice belongs equally to the prisoner and to the camp guard, to the kapo and to the official or the bystander. The camp is a heightened, concentrated — attractive or repellent, wrong or right — *image of the world*; but it does not define the laws and relations among human beings — it only confirms them. I mean not only the moral and spiritual and physical laws, but the fact that the camp operates exclusively through them, rather

than "creating" them. It merely opens the door to that possibility — which, due to the banality of evil, appeared to some as "normal." Even if certain manifestations of evil and degraded dignity are by-products of evil, they are not "unpredictable, incomprehensible, unresolvable, or non-existent," I would say. And the question of justice — of why someone can realise themselves more or less, longer or shorter — is once again beyond the logic and knowledge of, or the answer to, the question of what is our fundamental general and personal *purpose*. That purpose is disclosed through cognition and "time" and through those closest to us — yet already in this world it is clear that our existence is not mathematically fixed. But this does not mean it is chaotic. My grandfather used to say: "*People do not leave this world in order.*" Nor do they arrive in it, I would add — given my own family experiences. But *experience and love* are, in themselves, in my view a "proof" that we are not "alone" — in every sense of the word.

"WE" (I+I...) AND NOT "I"

In analysing the state of my dying grandmother, I sought to show — or at least I tried — that "our truth" is not "general truth" (as Hegel would have it), but a part of it. And that general truth is not always "human error" (as Heidegger would have it) — but the reverse. I include our *Dasein* in Being — though never fully in this world. Hegel travels too quickly towards God, and Heidegger too quickly towards the world and ourselves — not in order to draw us closer to the world and to ourselves, but to distance us from both. But where then — into contemplating the irruption of being from nothingness alone? Our form and duty (or the moral law) is felt not only as an "island" — it is felt also as part of an archipelago and a sea. This became clear precisely through the help and struggle of myself, the doctors, and my grandmother herself — who resisted and wanted peace in dying (or in passing) — and it was similar with my father, grandfather, and beloved animals. Whilst we were accusing one another of who helped or failed to

help, and who was or was not obliged to do so, our real task was to find our bearings and to show willingness. But, equally, the person who suffers is under no obligation to present their suffering as a bill or to collect a debt from us who are healthier — nor to test us or make us "better people." That is not the same as keeping us in conformism or in a glass bell jar. One example of this is war. Those of us who experienced the war are not thereby "more conscious" of life than this generation who did not — and they need not be forced into it. My thesis remains, then, that paradise is not a "journey through hell" — but struggle has today become a "necessary evil" that can give rise to noble good. I often reproached my parents for overprotecting me. But what could they do? They would equally have erred the other way, and would again have been at the dock. The key here, however, is that neither death nor life is "one's own affair" — and my grandmother's vision of her own condition was both wrong and irresponsible, because we could not simply "leave her on the floor" as she wished. Bureaucracy was also entangled in this — with rules that were even well-intentioned — and there was more work after the death than before it. **Jean-Luc Nancy**, I see from certain summaries, writes of this emphasis on *we* and not *I*. For it is easiest to exclude everyone but oneself. Inclusivity has a price.

I mention cats frequently — and the construction of time. *Cats* are in truth *realists* of instinctual and biological anxiety about disappearance — an anxiety with which we are all obsessed. My grandmother towards the end slept constantly, as a cat does. For in that surrender of the struggle for life she did what was perhaps best: she "let go" — without blaming anyone any longer. She was retreating into her own existence and absence; and when she woke, she would ask what I first took to be another product of her confusion or autism: "*What time is it — TODAY?*" This will connect later with the question of time and an illusion that she „just fell asleep“. The logical question, of course, is "*what time is it — NOW?*" Regardless of Hegel's explanations of the concept of "now." But "now" is a lay concept — and also the concept of eternity within transience. That normalised "now" keeps us in the process of presence, wakefulness, and planning. She had

already, in truth, separated the present from DAY. This is phenomenal — and tragic. She had divided life into "additionally gifted days" and broader segments — thereby in fact narrowing and constraining it as a *final step before eternity* (or the end). She was dissolving the borders and no longer equating the same time in today's world with that of yesterday. She had lost, as she herself said, the "sense of time" — just as I too sometimes underestimate it — though she would have recognised me and heard me almost to the end, as did my grandfather. What they heard most clearly were the loudest words: "*I love you,*" or "*Your grandson has come — Bartul.*" My grandmother would whisper; my grandfather would try to respond, barely catching his last breath. "Today" is, in fact, a biblical concept of presence — and of eternity. I have not yet given a summary of the philosophers' views on suicide as an active act (including these passive acts, which I seek most to unmask as a new, concealed, and dark secret of care homes).

Among those philosophers who offer, in general terms, some support (at least partially) for my position: **Parmenides, Goethe, Bergson, Leibniz, and Aristotle.** "Neither nothing nor something" can arise *from nothing* — in my view, independently of any "first mover." Does one need to be a philosopher to see that the answer to the question "*Why is there something rather than nothing?*" lies in the fact that something is *fuller than nothing*? And who assigns the value to that fullness — *we, as beings, and being itself*. This is of course difficult to prove. Spirit and values exist, I am convinced, in spite of everything — before us, independent of us, and beyond us. I need not love a dog, raise it, or breed it further in order to create its value — I simply *see* it. I give it my seal of recognition and, through wonder, intensify being. As for the fall from paradise: this is somewhat puzzling. But in classical and modern theology — and in my own thinking, despite its uncertainties — from a "true paradise" one cannot simply "depart," for no one in a state of complete goodness and knowledge would willingly pass "into darkness." But **Hume** is not just wrong when he writes that „I“ doesn't exist the way we think, and that it is a constant change. And so does *Žižek* or materialists think that we've only developed *prefrontal cortex* and language once in a time, as evolution *surplus* or anomaly, and it makes us consider empathy, meanings or even suicide as reality problems instead of some illusions. Is the tongue itself a God's gift or FOXP2 gene?

OUR "INERTIA" AS (COUNTER-)PROOF THAT "EMPTINESS DOES NOT EXIST"

Every morning we feel that there is something we "must" do — and yet equally that we often "do not want to." Which, then, is true? If spirit is the prime mover and not some random life-energy, then the body is in any case only a *manifest of inner state* — and not the reverse. We do not get up because we are hungry, or because we are late somewhere — for we do not need to get up immediately and can lie in a while longer — but because we *want* to ("must"), which is to say that a spiritual decision moves us first. The body is often only symptomatic — and I will not go to the extreme of claiming that illnesses too are merely symptoms or consequences of spirit alone, for that is too deep a question. Yet **Frankl** observed that physical illness in camp prisoners would coincide with the psychological "deadline" of their giving up. We all console ourselves by lowering the bar in life — whilst concealing within ourselves the very criterion that is the opposite. We say: "*one only has to die.*" Or: "*if only I had my health.*" Yet in essence we all think we are "immortal" — and that it is "others" who fall ill and die. I have sometimes found this self-assurance irritating — just as, from the other direction, I have found the "lamentation." A person cannot, in any case, go against oneself, against selfhood, against being (and I say *being* here rather than a more technical term, preferring the ordinary word to a false one). One fears "not having oneself." This is not only arrogance — it may also be proof that the living are, in truth, "right," and that death "does not exist" — though it "smells" everywhere. People bury the dead because they mistakenly believe they are dead; cats bury no one — because they rightly believe that everyone is biologically dead, and they withdraw with dignity into solitude.

When must one die? What shall we do when we have health — and what when we have illness? My father rises to his feet despite his illness; my grandmother died whilst still physically healthy. **Tomislav Ivančić** would cite the example of a 107-year-old man who lived long through exercise, discipline, and regularity. My grandfather and grandmother were similar,

viewed from the positive side. My grandfather always dined at seven in the evening and took a short nap in the afternoon — and he did not "choose" healthy food. He spoke against sportsmen whilst in fact living, for much of his life, *as a sportsman*. This is why campaign athletes like me are in fact less athletic than those with discipline in smaller, "non-athletic" habits. But a person always lacks one perspective or another. When my grandmother would say that people who live long are "exceptions" — as she herself was — I would always respond with a counter-question: *"Who says? Perhaps it is those of us who are poor at it who are the exceptions. Why not look to the 'better people'? They may simply be normal — not heroes."* She constantly insisted that she had outlived everyone in the family and resisted even the idea of that as abnormal. We often fix upon something and do not even feel it happening. And when something grows heavier, we "assess" it as proof of ruin and worthlessness — or of misplaced merit. Spiritual evils in the world are the root and the problem. My father and another man from the club were both in intensive care recently. The other had a "smaller belt" — a lesser spiritual resilience — and did not survive; whilst both had appeared to be "at death's door."

If we *are* — then we do not "have ourselves"; we simply *are*. Our fear is only an appearance — and that is the trap of anxiety. We *diminish* ourselves when the spirit is weak — we do not destroy ourselves. That diminishment is, in fact, the most painful thing — more so than annihilation. This is why I choose the path of least resistance and, owing to my own laziness, choose the lesser evil — or rather the good. We have even less "right" to ourselves — to being or to nothingness — because we did not even create ourselves. I have seen that the system does not permit one to relinquish property or a car without considerable effort. And so too does the system of life or of God not permit one to relinquish the self — the highest value, after God. But regardless of whether we desire freedom, life, or death, we have in truth only two desires: *either to be, or to have ourselves*. From the moment we exist, we cannot "not wish to be" — for that is a contradiction. It is like driving a car that "does not want to drive" whilst the engine is running. We can only "steer." What we may have is fatigue, poor maintenance, and so

on. Or we desire peace, we desire to disappear... which means we desire once again — *to be in nothingness*. And that is a form of being.

If we knew that we *are*, and that this carries the same "value" as if we *are not* — accepting defeatism into the bargain — we ought not to be troubled at all. Or if we knew that things can always get worse. But we *want* — we want *to have*. **Fromm** might, in part, agree with this dichotomy. Philosophy, in my view, is therefore not a "rhetorical" or logical craft or a monopoly of philosophers. It is, rather, political and experiential or value-laden thinking. Psychology, likewise, is for me no science with which psychologists are more occupied than their patients. The law, which is my own discipline, is not "my right" to interpret because I hold a degree, the bar examination, a doctorate, papers, experience, or anything else of that kind. Law is a *talent*. What my professor told me on this point was worth more to me than the grade. For I asked myself how one could have a "talent" for such a thing. Why had he told me that my talent for law went hand in hand with my talent or desire for art? Where is it written that this is so? Yet I also know that my "great-uncle", like my great-grandfather, did legal and notarial work and was respected, without holding a degree. None of this denies formal education. But I do hold that my success in passing examinations was not down to my "studying" alone, still less to lectures, but perhaps to genes — just like my other grandfather's self-taught guitar playing, whilst my father never learned the instrument, even in school music lessons. An examination is only confirmation of what one already is or may yet become; I shall not go into that further. But I know I could not have learned, understood, or come to love biology even had I wanted to. Nor could my grandmother — she gave up that course of study. She might have "forced" herself in a *Nietzschean* manner and become a biologist today. I scarcely believe she is what she is, let alone a biologist. For I learned later that my grandfather had helped her with examinations in literature, on account of which he himself completed that course as well. She, in essence, is a born *teacher* — her former pupils have remained grateful to her — and pedagogy was for her a secondary subject. My

grandfather had initially wished to study mathematics, and I myself got the highest mark in mathematics — at the re-sit examination. Yet a person does have certain upper and lower limits in their natural course (as I do in chess, with an Elo ceiling of around 1000). What does this say? A boy in our karate club worked his way up to brown belt. In two years he had achieved only a single tournament win. Is he a karateka? He is a victor over himself, and he has the karate spirit, but he is not a karateka. How many people are karateka yet have no belt...

If we want nothing, we still "must" lie down, breathe, sleep, die. The process, as with my grandmother, runs independently of our wish — and of her own or my consciousness. What does this mean? The (greater) Being deliberately allows itself to *withdraw from itself*, so that we may fill that place. There can be no remaining — emptiness. We are not drawn by emptiness; we are drawn by Being. The only question is which way our small *Dasein*, our small "divinity", turns. Being is not empty without us — it merely desires to be fuller *with* us. *We* are empty without it. It is extraordinary that consciousness has at all "divided" or "multiplied" itself in this manner and yet somehow functions. Only an absolute love can produce all of this — one that is unconditional within its own conditionality. At that point this absolute love is fuller than itself and proves itself. Yet it does so neither quantitatively nor qualitatively more or less than what it is. This is why Hegel's dialectic, too, is sometimes an illusion. Spirit and knowledge are realised — *before us*. This is not determinism.

As I write these lines, I received a message from the care home: my grandmother has been admitted, and they are asking in a panic why she does not respond. This came after she had only just died — having waited twenty-five years for her place. This is not only proof of the efficiency and inefficiency of bureaucracy and the absurdity of a *terror over mourning*; it is also proof that life does not stop even after death. By this I do not mean merely something abstract, mediated through us younger people and symbolism — for that would imply that only the last among us holds some consciousness in time. Rather, I hold that they are *now* alive, because spirit

has greater "knowledge". They see what I write and what I do. They are proud in this intention of mine. If I *believe*, then I also *know*. And if I know, then I am not mad. Many *pretend* to know, or to believe, or to be either mad or wise. I have seen this through a great many cases of "possession" or "visionaries" and the like. Because of my capacity for reading the emotions on a face, and what I think of as my "double perspective", I have often seen that the truly mad are those who pretend to be so — or that the "possessed" are those who pretend to be. For I myself once pretended. Sadly, even in many cases of lobotomy or electroshock, it struck me that the treatment was excessive for the disorder concerned, and was used rather as an instrument of *ultimate resistance to resistance*.

PERSONAL SYNTHESIS OF BEING — AFFIRMATIONISM AS NON-FEAR

A friend of mine, another theologian, tells me that we suffer anxiety, or possess a fallen nature, owing to "the possibility of return to the nothingness from which we arose — the attraction towards it". I, however, think that we have an attraction towards *departure*, not return into nothingness — even were the nothingness of the soul to exist. For, as Han puts it in *Enter the Dragon*: "*we are born knowing only life*."⁵⁸ Our *development* does not fall — only our *will* does. Like a car driving forward in reverse gear. We alone have a choice — even if only partial, perhaps merely apparent — to choose *to be or not to be*. Animals and things do not have this; nor, to the point of the absurdity of the *crucifixion*, does God Himself — which is nothing other than empathy for the salvation of the human being. This is why our freedom is even more valuable than the freedom of Being. We can give meaning, love, and life to that which — *need not be*. In this, God allows us to be God; or Being allows us to be Being. Our joy is

⁵⁸Han to Williams, in Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon* (Robert Clouse, dir., Warner Bros., 1973): "We are all ready to win, just as we are born knowing only life. It is defeat that you must learn to prepare for."

therefore not happiness but the *fullness of spirit*, of which no one can say it is not primary. Freedom in choice, intermixed with all things, gives romance and value to reality. Whereas the satanist says, "Do not be God to me," the enlightened human being, full of love, says: "Be my God still more!" For all that is mine — *rests* upon something, and does not arise from itself alone. To *desire* something is not the same as *to be*. **TO BE**, in the full sense, = *existing + willing + desiring + knowing + being-able + acting + bearing witness...* This holism is perhaps not entirely new, but it is precisely the extension of a step at which **Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel, Descartes**, and others mentioned, became "stuck" — or where they stopped. With the absence of any one of these elements, Being is "compressed", like merchandise in a press, but it does not vanish. It is impoverished. Hegel might not have minded my saying that this is a kind of hybrid of **Berdyaev** — himself a Russian Orthodox personalist on the margins of his own tradition — *and* of the Catholic personalists. Kant poses the question of who we are, of what we should do, of what we can do, and so forth. Pretentiously, in substance and essence, *I know now who I am* — and I know why idleness, depression, anxiety, or hatred "press" the soul and produce a nausea that both the system and the individual struggle to recognise. Hitherto I had only guessed. Being allowed me to err and suffer that I might gain the knowledge and experience that abolish suffering. For I already anticipate this in advance, and desire it from the outset. I do not know today what I shall desire tomorrow, and so Being "forgives" these errors in the course of the *intermezzo*. As **Frankl** puts it: when one knows why one suffers, and possesses an accurate picture of suffering, then suffering loses much of its hold (a thought close to **Spinoza's** claim in *Ethics* V that a passion ceases to be a passion the moment we form a clear and distinct idea of it). Anxiety likewise (in part) *disappears* when I see what its physical and psychological causes are. People who have lived with anxiety and depression for decades are not bad, or weak, or excessively traumatised; they simply, unfortunately — *do not see*. Just as stage fright disappears the moment the examination begins.

THE TRIUMPH OF SPIRIT OVER MEANINGLESSNESS: THE PRESENCE OF TRUTH AND BEING AS ONTOLOGICAL CONTINUITY AGAINST THE SPIRIT'S WEARINESS AS PERHAPS THE SOLE PROOF OF THE PRIMACY OF NOTHINGNESS

"Were I to have sat at coffee with Heidegger and Schluck, as my grandfather did, what would I have asked them?"

I should not have asked **Heidegger**: is there something rather than nothing, why is there something, why is there nothing, why has Being been forgotten, why does everything in the end revolve around time... I should perhaps have asked him: "Professor Martin Heidegger, I know that we live in *Das Man*, that we do what everyone does, that we disperse ourselves and compress ourselves into anxiety, depression, embitterment, and the rest. But why do *you* think that the compression *towards nothingness* is the positive, and not the negative, path to authenticity of Being? We are not a conjunction of Being and nothingness (and, sadly, *nullity*), as you suppose; we are a conjunction of Being and (*Dasein*) alone. **Chardin** and **Scheler** might lend me support. Nullity and nothingness are, in my view, our *product*, not a necessity, an outcome, or the other side of the coin. We were born *to be*, *to be able*, *to have*, and *to be* — in the full sense — and all that **Nietzsche**, too, affirms — but which is no illusion or personal stance, but, in essence, the very opposite. Yet our Christian or other need to strip ourselves bare again proceeds from a 'reverse' birth and the conviction that Being is *full* when at the outset we have again all that belongs to us, rather than when at the end we have nothing. So although eschatology and ontology are two distinct disciplines of observation, I hold that they sometimes intersect. Your *phenomenon* is good in itself, but rests perhaps upon an entirely wrong premise. Self-emptying without arrogance is positive in its action, and even in its teleological and theological (*telos* and *theos*) value, but it is negative in its ontology and eschatology. Even Jesus did not go to the cross to confirm a two-sided process by inverting it; he did

so to inaugurate it anew. If we are not shepherds of Being but implicitly of nothingness, then what is the use of our 'wakefulness' beyond a little time? Are we not all somehow wakeful within anxiety?" Frankl, too, holds that (supra-)meaning is something we *find*, not create; we feel it, but we do not understand it.

Heidegger would probably not have been amused; he would more likely have answered like a friend who is also an atheist: "Believe it, if it makes things easier for you." He would not have argued, nor expended his strength. He rarely received anyone at all for coffee, especially after the political upheavals — but he was a close friend and collaborator of Professor **Karl-Heinz Volkmann-Schluck**, just as my grandfather was. Examinations in sociology and philosophy were often taken on those coffees and dinners. (Schluck's wife, Anneliese, was no minor figure in this circle either: she had taken her doctorate under **Karl Jaspers**, which my family knows but few others remember.⁵⁹) Reader, you will not know what pride I feel that, at a dinner at Schluck's, my grandfather remained consistent and steadfast in some single position of his (which one I do not know) — and Schluck was known for his temperamental reactions. But when his wife said: "I think Colleague Marušić is right", he did not at once agree, but he "settled". "Right — right *how*?" One day, by way of "reward", he proposed that they all go for coffee together at Heidegger's. Tell me whether there is anything in this book worth more than that? Certainly not my own *amateur ramblings*. It is, rather, the event that did occur, that I bear witness to; the love that took place — my love for truth, for my grandfather, for the professor's wife, for those geniuses, for the social sciences, for people like Schluck or Heidegger, for the small ordinary people

⁵⁹ **Anneliese** Volkmann-Schluck is documented in antiquarian catalogues (ZVAB and others) as the widow of Karl-Heinz Volkmann-Schluck (1914–1981). That she herself completed her doctorate under Karl Jaspers is a detail preserved within our family's memory of those years rather than in any easily accessible public record; the wider scholarly literature on the Schluck household is sparse, and the fact deserves to be set down here precisely for that reason. Jaspers was active at Heidelberg and, from 1948, at Basel until his death in 1969 — the timeframe is consistent with such a doctorate.

without whom I should not eat. If I were to say that I know they *see me* — not merely that I see them — psychiatrists would conclude that I am losing touch with reality. Yet I have, lucidly and at full strength, the strongest non-symbolic consciousness imaginable.

I would not, of course, simply have backed down from Heidegger's wall — but I should also have been honest that I have no fully formed alternative wall to put in its place. My only refuge would have been a return to a kind of *Kantianism*, deepened through experience: a recovery of the moral law within and of the categorical command, taken not as a dry rule but as a phenomenological fact of the inner life, with the realm of the *noumenal* left intact precisely as that which philosophy honestly cannot exhaust. For when I look closely, I find that almost every philosopher I am criticising here ends up dragging Kant along with him, whether he wishes to or not: **Hegel** transforms him into Spirit; **Schopenhauer** keeps the thing-in-itself but renames it *Will*; **Nietzsche** rejects him and yet preserves the *form* of the moral imperative, only inverting its content; **Heidegger** sets aside the noumenal but turns *Dasein* into a categorical analytic of being. Each builds his own roof, but the load-bearing wall beneath remains, on a closer look, Kantian. I do not pretend to do better. I merely admit, as a layman, that Heidegger's path forward strikes me as a dead end, and that the path back to Kant — with all his limits — is at least an honest dead end, one which acknowledges that it is a dead end. From there one may begin again.

I never knew what *Kairos* meant, although I once travelled in a boat that bore that name — but I have seen it now. When I have experienced a kind of spiritual ecstasy because of conclusions, memories, and the meaning of life, I would often wish for the moment to be repeated. Frankl says that without suffering and death human life cannot be complete. Joy too, perhaps, would then not be complete. But here I disagree. I have the feeling that *only here* does suffering have meaning. At the very same moment I received a message about the old and eternal small-town problems from the village. It was my task to rise above all that and yet not close my eyes to practical concerns. But that is what it is to live. One can, and one must —

but one's capacities grow smaller, especially in the case of old and combative people such as my father. He wishes to, but he can no longer overcome and resolve everything. He does not want to move from descent to slalom — and I have always thought in the reverse direction, which is also not always good. Something similar may have been the case with Nietzsche.

Love is the supreme law, but many do not have it. Many do not say from the heart, as my wife and I say to each other every morning: "I love you." They say it because they must, or to console themselves, or to console those around them. My parents used to say they had the firmest marriage in the world. And they did. But the very fact that they boasted of this made me feel that something was missing. At the first serious test, with illness, they endured only a few months — or no time at all — before retreating, each within themselves. My mother no longer wanted to take my father back home; I did, although I was not entirely sure of myself either. I saw that the greatest people have the greatest faults. Whether this is a necessary truth I do not know. I know only that it is easier to be imperfect, but our duty is "to be perfect, as God is perfect" — *like* God, not to *be* God or as a god. And so I decided to take responsibility upon myself in moments when "my father needs me". He has returned home now, to his hospital bed, and everything has fallen back into rhythm. He used to change me in nappies and protect me; now the situation is reversed. I am glad I am able to give that back.

"THE REAL QUESTION" — PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL — ON EVIL AND DEATH

The real question is not *what is life and why, why illnesses, why discomfort, why and from where does the world come...* Not even *is there life after death, is there life before death, who are we, who is God, what is time, and so on, what do I want, what do I wish to know, what may I become... what is proof, what is the categorical imperative and what is not, why is there something.* Rather — **would you choose death and evil if you had no motive and no punishment to fear?** If you knew that you are loved, that your life has meaning, and that evil has bad consequences. Even if you did not know this — would you strike at the innocent and the beautiful for no reason, without willed defiance or benefit, with a perfect evolutionary brain and a pure will? **WOULD YOU CHOOSE PURE EVIL AND PURE DEATH?**

I think even selfish people would say — NO. Because you lose.

And the unselfish would say NO — because you do not give!

So the human being attempts what he cannot and does not want. But the inertia mentioned earlier is such that it produces an illusion of the sole momentary possibility of truth, both in the brain and in the soul. And you become your own — slave! The only one to blame, then, is — Love and the Infinite. And Love and the Infinite cannot be abolished beneath us, and cannot be at fault. We can only abolish our own finite part here. The other part we attempt, in vain, to abolish. This is why the system, or God, or friends are all at the same time — *too gentle and too harsh* — when you are falling. But no one can govern your will, for that would be worse still. As Fulir answers in Krešo Golik's cult Croatian film *Tko pjeva, zlo ne misli* — a comedy of the desacralisation of evil: "*Why does the first voice lead and the bass merely **accompany**?* Well, that is because... it is so." God may be man, but the Father is still God. God did not "disappear" on Calvary.

FINAL CONCLUSION — WHY MY POSITION RUNS DIAMETRICALLY AGAINST HEIDEGGER AND SCHLUCK ON THE KEY POINTS: A METAPHYSICAL THEODICY OF FREEDOM AND A PROVOCATION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF MYSTERY

I do not in fact know what my grandfather said to them. Perhaps he did not agree about the "transience of truth". That much I know for certain. Evidently he did not agree about something, just as I do not — and so perhaps genes and the unconscious play a part, since as a child I knew nothing of this and I still do not know much, save that all three of them respected one another, which is a great honour for the family — and not something to boast of. My grandfather himself did not like to boast, but often withdrew into himself, as I do. He would then not allow people either an attack or fullness of trust. The humanities did not interest me, and he himself drifted towards the social sciences for the easier evidentiary ground. Though the sociology of knowledge is something on the border. Within all of this I am, of course, a fly — one that either irritates and is easily swatted, or that may sting a little because it is small — though that is also an advantage. Although Nietzsche was an "anti-Christian" and not actually an "Antichrist", **Volkman-Schluck** stood somewhere precisely between Nietzsche and Heidegger — his Heideggerian provenance was unmistakable (he was Professor at Cologne from 1949 until his death in 1981, and produced a study of the Presocratics that owed nearly everything to Heidegger), but he also wrote a sustained reading of Nietzsche as the end of Western metaphysics.⁶⁰ The fact that both he and Heidegger end up

⁶⁰Karl-Heinz **Volkman-Schluck** (1914–1981), Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cologne from 1949 until his death, was firmly within the Heideggerian orbit; his book on the Presocratics openly avows that debt. Yet he also produced *Die Philosophie Nietzsches: der Untergang der abendländischen Metaphysik* (ed. Bernd Heimbüchel, 1991), in which

revolving around the need to flee the material and the system in which norms are in some way imposed or forced shows that, in fact, they all re-enter a strange zone of nihilism, existentialism, and the question of "thrownness". And then, of course, Heidegger flees most of all into *phenomenology* and the disclosure of "*that which shows itself of itself*" — which is to my mind entirely mistaken, even if we learn it all. *Meaning* is the key, and one ought not to flee it but to return to it, even when sometimes one returns wrongly.

➤Heidegger's thesis that everything has gone into the "forgetting of Being" is itself, within his own work, mistaken. For in him, perhaps, everything has gone rather into the forgetting of *nothingness*, which was the backbone of his thought. I am of course aware of his Freiburg inaugural *Was ist Metaphysik?* (1929), where the *Nichts* is foregrounded; my objection is not that Heidegger neglects nothingness, but that he treats it as the background condition that *lets Being come forth*. Not even in a negative sense, but as something naturally necessary that "Being may leap forth". To my mind it is the reverse — "***nothing* apparently leaps out of Being, not the other way around**". **Nothingness is a fiction so that Being may be free!** We are perhaps even part of Being and of an omniscience that has itself withdrawn its knowledge from itself (since even people at the threshold of life and death speak of greater knowledge and a wider horizon than this one when they "leave the body"). That is to say, our being has *wanted* to know less in order to be fully free and to move further and in new directions, and therefore to wonder at everything. **We do not marvel at — mystery — as the pair claim, nor must we "listen for" it. We do not need to know the mystery, nor revere it. We must unveil it!** Even faith often says: it is a mystery. From birth onwards we *uncover* both being and Being, sometimes anxiously, for *meaning is the only fullness of Being and beings*.

Nietzsche is read as the closing figure of Western metaphysics. To speak of him as standing "between Nietzsche and Heidegger" is therefore not a loose impression but a description of the tension within his own corpus.

This is not a transcribed sentence; it is my position. And my ignorance in youth in fact made me happier. Anxiety was sweeter then. The first essay we ever had in school bore precisely the title: "Human existence is merely a sum of anxieties." Excitedly I carried that essay to my grandfather and to my speech therapist, because I thought I was already an expert on anxiety. He said: "It is good, but it needs a little 'tidying' before you send it any further."

Being does not withdraw because we "*know and impose technology and uncover truth*", as the hermeneuticist Schluck more or less holds. Being deliberately withdraws, in my view. **It withdraws deliberately, within itself, or towards us.** Not because we, as they think, *push it out*. We are at worst either an *agape* "shepherd of Being" or a *technological* shepherd of Being. But we are not, and need not be, the passive shepherd of Being that they advocate. We need not save a vision, nor even life, but the *form of beings*. We have not forgotten Being — we have forgotten *being* in its essence and dignity. The philosophers before Heidegger struggled precisely against that forgetting, and not to confirm by their work that there is no forgetting in beings while there is in Being. We have never even reached the question of Being... Heidegger wished to leap to the end of the book without realising that one cannot grasp the end from the end alone, let alone the book or the beginning.

➤I, on the basis of experience and not theory, see exclusively that I require *logotherapy* and *hagiotherapy*, not hermeneutics or mere phenomenology. Why? **Heidegger himself says that the symptom of an illness is not the illness. On the other hand, that symptom is a phenomenon and an illness in itself,** as Frankl or Ivančić would also say. Yet if I have no symptom today, I shall not at once rejoice. In the village, those who physically died earliest were precisely those without early symptoms — and those with a long-standing spiritual symptom. Science and medicine are sometimes the most important instruments of truth and of our reliance upon the future. "For man can live only in the perspective of

the future," Frankl says. This sounds logical but adds further confusion to entrenched debates about the hierarchy of importance of times. Knowledge is essential. Why? When I saw that I might have inherited my father's autosomal disease, I undertook every measure to determine this as soon as possible. What was hidden from me did not help me; my anxiety only grew greater. I was not told that he had such a disease, let alone that I might. So knowledge interested me precisely in order to reduce anxiety, even if anxiety was momentarily growing. Knowledge was my desire, my choice, and human nature. I saw in my father that he had risen to his feet because he was physically better — but also because he *wished* it. So his spirit had not weakened as much as I had said, although his body did initially have to be forced. He wished his body to replace the spirit's effort. Just as now the reverse is the case — the body (mercifully) is forced *by the spirit*, and the harmony is better. My grandmother did not get up because she — *did not wish to*. Even her contemporaries kept calling her to come out. She did not know that her passivity had aggravated her gastritis, that she was weakening and not eating. She regarded food as a compulsion. She did not know that this would bring her death sooner, and she did not want to know — indeed she desired death. So our past does catch up with us tomorrow, as Heidegger says — yes — but so does our symptom of fictitious health or illness, and real health or illness, immediately afterwards. **What "showed itself of itself" to me — her black bloody mouth, her black bloody stool, her black wet bed — did not show itself, first, to her, or even to her doctors!** She said: "I am all right, I have not had a stool, I did not vomit but only a little." Already over the symptom we had different visions. The same was true with research on the connections between ataxia, anxiety, non-motor and psychiatric symptoms, and so on. Now we know even the (long-term) prognosis of my father's, and possibly my, illness — but we prepare for *coexistence and co-dying* with it. When "the human being dies", every illness dies with him. But there is no hurry. Why? Perhaps because of the "moral law within me", or because, were it otherwise, everyone could and should kill themselves. She did not have such a law, and wanted me to let her be (even on the floor), but I had to call the ambulance, since otherwise

she would have suffocated and remained lying there, and the moral law would have been broken — mine ultimately (or the state's). The fact that she was not in pain whilst (partially) ill, and that I was in pain whilst healthy, is no proof of truth. Healthy diagnoses from doctors are therefore often as "dangerous" as the rest. The question is what I wish to *believe* in a healthy diagnosis. Hers, then, was perhaps a more important phenomenon than my own "forced" one. But she could have prevented this through cooperation and discipline, delayed the illness, and prolonged her life and all its blessings. So even if I had not had the knowledge that she was dying, ill, and "lazy" (which she partly admitted), I should not have influenced the following day. Nor the days before. One might say: what difference does it make whether I prolonged life by a few days? *That is exactly what this is about.* It is not the quantity and quality of knowledge, or relatively short-term prolongation of health (symptomatic, felt, or actual), that matters — rather, **I SAVED A POSSIBILITY.** I became a **co-architect of Being.** I felt both my own and a general duty and possibility to try and save it. I thought holistically: not merely medically, nor theologically, nor from her perspective. **Being does not compel us, as Heidegger thinks — it (gives) itself to us!** This is the sole freedom within necessity. It is neither freedom nor necessity. For I, too, was not strictly compelled to do anything. It is — *intervention, creative freedom, and the wait for us — for ourselves — through (self-)disclosure.* **Mystery does not exist (even in faith) — we simply do not yet know the mystery (in full), or cannot know it.** Heidegger even "complicates" language, for he holds that language is not an object but a horizon, and so must be "mysterious". This is so that he himself may not appear to have "uncovered" Being too much.

➤ **"MIRROR HELD UP TO HEIDEGGER"** — The image which follows is a layman's analogy, not a substitute for argument; what I am after is the structural point that the solution lies in the place we have refused to look. Recently, I had my indicators switched off for ages because I had taken out a blown relay and concluded, from looking at the mirror image of the car, that I had pulled it from the slot for fog lights. I discovered a hundred

possible places where the solution could be, except the one where it actually was — and where the solution was so simple that I did not believe in it. The same may be said of Heidegger's inverted perspective. We *create* an illusion of the system and of its absolute power, and of our own blind (un)intentional "servitude" within it. But we *are* in that system. Laws exist. The fact that Heidegger does not wish to value the system as something enclosed within a frame *implicitly grants* it value. Just as my grandfather noticed, for instance, that **Mannheim** tried to create a distance from the natural sciences and from personalism alike in disclosing *truth*, yet himself demonstrated his own contradiction and a movement back towards that very thing he refused. Nor did he want a "third way".⁶¹ Our freedom is only a freedom within the system, and within the unforced possibility of being a little different — within "blessed ignorance" and progressively growing knowledge. The system is not what matters. The frame is not what matters. What matters is precisely *the picture*. But we do not see even the picture and the mosaic, let alone the (empty) frame. Heidegger says: "Stop looking at the picture; look at the frame." I say: let us at last begin to look at the picture.

➤ **Science (subjective and objective) is not the hostage of philosophy, nor is the reverse the case**, as has been thought. Nor does the object matter. Philosophy is a hostage to itself, and so is science. But only the *teleology* (purposiveness) of the two in synergy gives an answer. Even a

⁶¹Karl **Mannheim** (1893–1947), in *Ideologie und Utopie* (1929; Eng. tr. *Ideology and Utopia*, 1936), founded the sociology of knowledge on the thesis that all thought is socially conditioned. The internal difficulty my grandfather pressed upon him is a well-known crux in the secondary literature: if every total worldview is ideologically situated, the sociology of knowledge that says so must itself be situated — and Mannheim's remedy, *Relationismus* (relationism, distinguished from relativism), together with the privileged role of the "freely-floating intelligentsia", has been read by his critics as exempting his own discipline from the very rule it imposes on everyone else. He neither fully embraces relativism nor offers a third standpoint above ideology and utopia, hence the movement back towards what he had refused.

kind of spiritual utilitarianism, I would say. If I know that I shall be ill tomorrow, I shall not only have a different (perhaps worse) perception, but more possibilities of not being unhappy either today or tomorrow. Mere observation, as they think, is not enough. Knowledge and action are also indispensable. Not only for the sake of utility and feeling. Rather, I am the one *who broadens possibility and time within the picture itself!* **We are not hostages of time and of "being-toward-death"; we are even creators of time and life, both here and beyond!** The picture cannot easily leap out of itself, but it can be painted differently. The frame cannot be changed, nor can the canvas. We hold only the brush.

➤ **An excessive reliance on the present moment is the other extreme.**

This is the case in *de Mello's* worthy Jesuit "self-help" philosophy and theology, which **Ratzinger** rightly criticised in part.⁶² In the end the question is *Sorge or caritas?* — for every philosophy and faith. Blessed "moderate and time-diminishing ignorance". Jesus, too, says that we are "too much in the future" and that we should return to the present, although that present is perhaps already eternal here. But not the present as lived by the average routine person; nor the present of the moment as Heidegger urges. Not, either, the present of *de Mello* or of the Eastern philosophies, which exclude the purpose of past and future as such. Rather, in everything there are always two faces to the coin, except in Being itself and in the Absolute (as I see it). The relativity of truth *without* this is in truth — the only truth.

⁶²Anthony **de Mello** SJ (1931–1987), Indian Jesuit whose *Sadhana, Awareness* and other works of "awareness spirituality" were widely circulated. In June 1998 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under its then Prefect Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Benedict XVI), issued a *Notification* declaring central positions of *de Mello's* later writings "incompatible with the Catholic faith and capable of causing grave harm" — in particular the reduction of God to an impersonal cosmic reality, the treatment of Jesus as one master among others, the dismissal of the question of the human person's final destiny as irrelevant, and the radical priority of the present moment over past and future. My objection is to the third and fourth points, which evacuate the very structure of meaning to which Frankl and the tradition of *logos* had been committed.

Schluck and **Professor Batovanja** would be angry with me. But perhaps they would also see a cooled-down, somewhat matured passion without a desire for "points". Through the sieve let a grain of truth fall.

A "COUNTER-NIETZSCHE" — NOT THE ANTICHRIST, BUT A SET OF COUNTER-MOVES TO HEIDEGGER, DESCARTES, CAMUS, NIETZSCHE, HEGEL, AND SARTRE

The heading is, of course, deliberately provocative. I am not pretending to "negate" these thinkers in the strict sense — the layman cannot do so, and the proper philosopher would not need to — and I am not preaching eternal optimism either. Rather, I want to show that fear of the unknown and of ignorance is "human"; but fear in the form of anxiety or depression is, rather — *a desire for the impossible*. As **Chesterton** put it, *romance is an inseparable part of reality*. Without it reality is — *incomplete*. Without critique, apology is — incomplete. Without one truth, another is often — incomplete (though not exclusive). These disorders, then, are their own (voluntary) problem — neither cause nor consequence of a problem. The will, of course, requires capacity, but above all it requires decision, attitude, and experience. One sees this pattern clearly enough: the *misogynist* and the *misandrist* will always find their justification when they have no contrary experience to weigh against it. Many philosophers — and I, too, among them — have had decades of contrary experience and yet have continued to "prove" this "truth". They were not lying; they had simply learnt to read their own *emptinesses* as if these were truths about reality. Truth need not even be forced. It is already there, somewhere, in some time. Our action must be — but not from rebellion, rather from proactivity and courage. Only now has the truth of my own happy marriage entirely effaced or supplemented older truths. A marriage that the Church cannot even confirm, because we are still not "normal". But is not every misogyny a *cry for love*? Is not every Antichrist a cry for Christ, and every

death a cry for life? Is not *resentment* a cry for peace, and Nietzsche's peace without true Christ and Christianity itself a cry for Him? Is not his peace itself *resentment* in another packaging — and his critique of Christianity a wish that it were true? Was he not, in defending the horse, a "Christian without Christ"? (The phrase is not mine; it is the broad sense in which **Karl Löwith** and others have read Nietzsche's late "transvaluation" — as itself a Christian gesture in inverted form.⁶³) And so he fell, for he could not by himself... If he is not the "Superman", and Christ not the "Son of God", woe then to us!

➤ **"COUNTER-PROOF"** — Descartes' "*I think, therefore I am*" is not, of course, something that excludes any other logical option. But it is largely mistaken, for our thinking and consciousness are not at all decisive for Being. They are only a "part" of Being, and time is a process within which our consciousness and thinking occur, or develop. My grandmother did not think yet she *was*; and I, of course, am a *witness* (at least of one perspective of her being). Not just a witness — *co-being*, on the basis of *neurological mirroring, empathy, knowledge and love*, and the fact that I issued from her womb, in the second generation. Is that mirror an image, or a window? Let us not go that far. Here I find myself unexpectedly closer to **C. G. Jung** than to any of the strict phenomenologists: his concept of *synchronicity* — meaningful coincidence that is not reducible to causality — names something that the average modern person mistakes either for pure chance or for the supernatural, when in fact it is neither. We live our lives so quickly, and forget them so completely, that we no longer notice the points at which they "rhyme" with the lives of others, with the dead, with our own past selves. The grandfather sitting at Heidegger's table is not a curiosity in a memoir; he is a still-active node in a web. To call that "memory" is to

⁶³ I borrow the broad reading from Karl **Löwith**, *Meaning in History* (1949) and *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (1935; Eng. tr. 1997), in which Nietzsche's "transvaluation of all values" and his doctrine of eternal recurrence are read as themselves bearing the formal structure of Christian eschatology in inverted form. The same intuition recurs, in different keys, in Eugen Fink and in Henri de Lubac. My use of "Christian without Christ" is a layman's shorthand for that reception, not an original claim about Nietzsche.

underplay it; to call it "providence" is, for the ordinary reader, to overplay it. Jung's *synchronicity* sits somewhere between, and is for me at least a working name for what we keep missing.⁶⁴ I, too, when I lay twice on the operating table: *I did not think yet I was*. I did not even *know*, yet I was. On the other hand, I believe that beyond death, knowledge begins — the dynamic, Hegelian kind. Only then does deep (not "consumable") union with the Principal Being begin, not here. Here we are only formed, and we do half the journey. If I touch a stone statue of a dove and say, "I touch, therefore I know that this is a dove," what have I gained? Descartes never intended his *cogito* as a test of the existence of external things; he intended it as the self-evidence of the *thinking subject* about its own existence. Granted. My objection is precisely to that limitation: *cogito* delivers a thinking subject and nothing else, and I press the very *narrowness* of the proof. The dove exists whether I touch it or not, and whether I think it or not; what is *given* in the *cogito* is one thin slice of reality — the subject performing the inference — not Being itself. Descartes did not produce only a *proof*; he produced together with it a *tool*, and the tool has been mistaken for the proof. Before I go on, it is already clear that my approach is the reverse of **Camus's**. I have not decided to go on living in "spite of life", but in affirmation of it. And I think the reverse of him: that "killing reason" is a flight into religion or metaphysical hope out of fear of the absurd silence of the universe. I emphasise, rather, empiricism — but not like **Comte**, to abolish theology and metaphysics, rather to supplement them. Empiricism can be placed first or last but never alone. So too in the social sciences, let alone the humanities.

⁶⁴C. G. **Jung** introduced *synchronicity* (German *Synchronizität*) as a non-causal principle of meaningful correspondence, most fully in *Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle* (Princeton University Press, 1952, repr. 1960). I invoke the concept not as a paranormal claim, but as the most honest available name for what the average modern person otherwise either dismisses as coincidence or inflates into the supernatural — and what neither of those framings adequately captures.

THE TWO RELIGIOUS PRESUPPOSITIONS

➤God is omnipotent

Religious explanations are strong. But they too fall into difficulties if one does not think them further. The first says: "God is omnipotent." Then come the various questions: can or cannot God do something contradictory, and so on. Can God, for instance, be *non-love*? He can wish, create, or permit non-love. But he who "*is*" cannot be something else, or "nothing". He cannot *be and not be*. What, then, does "omnipotent" mean, if he cannot even change himself? Aside from the fact that we in this world cannot have such knowledge and logic concerning the source of Being itself — for "the ant does not know what man or God thinks" — this is not even what matters. The problem is that on "the other world" we too have limitation. And that limitation actually confirms itself, and converts itself into the infinity from which it arises. So we enter the unlimited, blend again — or for the first time — with the absolute, and perhaps even become part of the absolute. But then we are *non-absolute of the absolute*. Mutually we are fuller than 100 per cent of each "alone for itself". This is the difference between philosophy, theology, and quantum physics. We are like a drop in the sea, and so we are at the same time the sea. *We* are, but we are not — the sea! For all that we are now still temporarily and more constrained, we are at the same time most free. Free not in a value sense but in a "physical" and volitional sense (despite the fallen nature, the circumstances, or whatever else, with which **Frankl** broadly agrees).

The knowledge and outlook beyond this body are broader if we are immaterial beings — for so people who have undergone "clinical death" testify. Why? Because the body's deterioration no longer "concerns" them. The body apparently deteriorates first, but in truth what deteriorates first is the *spirit*, then the body, and only at the end the soul. Deterioration is a process; the spirit not only manifests but also further weakens through a weak body, as a general and particular consequence of the human condition. People who have had clinical death have also reported peripheral vision of up to 300 degrees, and so on. Yet what is the difference? People

who experienced clinical death were not entirely "dead". Their "heightened reality" is therefore on the border between the eternal and the limited. When we die we enter eternity, the absolute, and knowledge. God has not only withdrawn now — and perhaps so have we — to give "space to us" and to another "possibility"; rather, He is *omnipotent* precisely because of this. Even Jesus' death on the cross is not non-being. We can be all things, but we cannot be (like) God. God can be all things, but cannot be man. He can be — like the God-man, the perfect Lamb, Jesus. But he cannot be — a real *sinful* human, even if he willed it. That is the only inexplicable boundary, and we all have eternal substance. This is why our soul "constricts", as it does when we act against Being and do not feel that we are doing so, or have no conscience. We feel always a physical and spiritual pain — but not pain of the soul. This is why it is so invisible and strange that the soul should have a "penalty" or a stain; and we often attribute this to a monopoly of God's and human laws, and not to a third component of the human being. We always view it through cause and effect. My third way is therefore a synthesis of phenomenology and meaning-making, not their exclusion.

➤Man is a free being — the metaphysics of freedom, eternity, and paradox

The chief and probably correct religious thesis is that we are freely-acting beings, at least in part. And likewise it is held, on the other side, *that our freedom is at its fullest precisely when we lack it, or when we surrender it to Being (to God)*. Children know what they may and may not do; we have limits, and so we are alongside God and order and love, rather than without these. This is a logical answer. But my answer is a third — **neither in heaven nor in hell is there freedom! Neither moral nor ontological! There is only — state. A dynamic state, and the confirmation of that state.** Spiritual pleasure as the peak of pleasures. Many who say they do not want pleasure are in fact lying — or take pleasure differently. Why is it so? Because "above" there is no time, only "eternity", although that eternity begins now.

But it is not — oriented to "now", as those who desire goodness on both worlds would have it. It is oriented to a present which is realised in a future present. I used to ask myself: "Who, in fact, would choose to be against Being and against God at the very last? What is worth that? God is cruel!" At that time I wished to kill myself, having no ally in either God or man — least of all in Satan, who "supported" me in defeatism. Only that the "liar" knows he lies. This can be bad for both. It is not realistic that we punish ourselves, nor that God punishes us, nor yet that there is no punishment at all. But that is precisely what it is about. When we take up a stance, it in fact reads: "I would rather suffer without God than be joyful with God." Oxymoron and paradox are the key secrets of everything, in truth. So **our full freedom is — now**. Not because we can do what we like, nor because we are joyful and fulfilled or unfulfilled. But because Being/God willed it, and probably so did we, that we should live first — alone (although we are not alone). And that in this process we should acquire knowledge, decision, and character — whether we will to be in Being or without it. Without it does not mean — *in non-being*. It means, much as it does here — *without him*! That is why hell is not, and cannot be, an empty place, nothingness, or annihilation — for we ourselves are not nothingness. We have the choice in the end: do we wish to be separate from the Absolute Being, do we wish to be re-united with Him "freely", do we wish in general to be united with Him or with some other version of Him? That is to will — life or death. And the problem is often precisely there. We cannot will what does — NOT EXIST. Nothingness is the only thing that — does not exist. That is the only illusion. *Annihilationism* is therefore wrong. We can only be *anti-Being*, or on its *periphery*. That is, in fact — hell. Whereas here there is only the "hell" of pain or of our decisions; but hell does not exist, since we may still return from impossibility into — possibility. Only then are we closest to infinity. This is why this-worldly freedom is the originally ontological freedom. And this eternal "struggle", with all its connections, is what radically separates this world from the concepts of hell and heaven alike. People often say: I went through hell. Or: I went through heaven, I went through catharsis, I saw the devil... We may think we went through it, and if we did — then we

went through. It is no longer there. Our eyes must be directed towards what will be. Whilst philosophers often think we have already gone through what is, and that what awaits us is nothingness, I think that is a delusion. As Jinx sings in *Bye Bye Baby Bye*: "*Perhaps heaven, too, is a fraud at the end — and perhaps the best is years behind us.*" I do not know. Although I love nostalgia, I am no advocate of the **Brickman** effect of nostalgia, for it is semi-true.⁶⁵ As is pathos, or romance — semi-true and neither true nor false. As is news reporting. And that half "spreads" itself through the whole, like for example the legal "ideal share" of joint ownership. This enters into infinity and that first lesson of philosophy we all studied. *Annihilationism* is wrong, but not from the mathematical logic of sin and punishment. Rather, because it has got stuck on the first lesson of the logic of paradox, and clings to it like a drunkard to a fence. Because it ontologically refuses the principle of infinity — which can be noticed and partially grasped already in this world. Worse still is that its doctrine proceeds precisely from — *a theology of infinity*. People find it hard to accept that something must be struck out and given up so that what is valuable and true may remain. People cannot and do not wish to grasp perfection through imperfection, freedom through a necessity that more often than not "need not be", necessity through freedom, and so on. Rather, they fall into various deterministic or hyper-libertarian conceptions. The hardest thing is only this: that behind pain a person hides their own pride, but also the right image of the world — that pain is not primary, that evil is only a privation of good, and that we await its end. But we ourselves do not allow the end. We cannot, and we do not wish, to allow an end to death and to evil. As in habituation and the consumption of bad content — something that is

⁶⁵The reference is to the so-called "nostalgia effect" documented by Philip **Brickman**, Dan Coates and Ronnie Janoff-Bulman in their 1978 study "Lottery Winners and Accident Victims: Is Happiness Relative?" (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 36/8, 917–927) — the same line of work in which Brickman and Donald Campbell had earlier proposed the "hedonic treadmill". Paraplegics in that study reported having been happier in the past than the comparison group; my point is that the inflation of past happiness is itself a partial truth, not a refutation of nostalgia tout court.

natural and in essence beautiful is at the same time vile and wrongly depicted (such as pornography in childhood). And so the image is radically different. Either it repels me, or I worship it today. There is no middle ground. For so the soul is constructed. Only the brain transforms the image of truth and pleasure into the image of the mirror and of Plato's cave. Many see practical and neurological problems in something — which is also part of the truth — but they do not see the ontological problem. Nor do I, in fact. But I have an experience of stepping out of register with myself, and of resolving this through flight into the extreme, or — as now — "flight" into creativity. As **Frankl** says, creativity is what most lacked to the people in the camp, and what is proof that we were created, and that we create, and do not only exist. That is why they spoke even with a tree. Not because they were mad, but because they said it was their only remaining — and also true — eternity. The problem of both the camp prisoners and ourselves is — in *having* and in the perception of *having* as god. And we all have the same choice in life sooner or later — but it is hard to think contrary to habit. We wish to think downstream, whilst we swim and think upstream.

➤ COUNTER-PROOF — THE ONTOLOGICAL MONISM OF BEING.

What I have been saying about Heidegger is not really to make him an antithesis. It is rather that he himself is a kind of *Super-Heidegger*. He inverts Descartes, for instance, holding it a better truth that "I am, therefore I think". This is fine. However, he is also "obsessed" with *Verfallen*. He says throughout that the "forgetting of Being" is the problem, while in his analyses he in fact confirms that the "forgetting of nothingness" (as a question) is the real problem. This is the Copernican move I want to make, and I do not pretend it is wholly novel. It is generally taken for granted that forgetting nothingness is the incorrect thinking, since human beings and philosophers from time immemorial have wrestled most with that question and with the search for meaning. In fact, most ancient and Greek philosophers as theists always found *some* answer to that, together with theologians, of course. Nothingness in fact troubles no one more than Heidegger, Nietzsche, and the like. They imply that the problem lies in our

underestimating that "fall". We often ask whether we would repeat this same life many times over. Heidegger agrees that the central question is *why is there something rather than nothing*, rather than asking, *is there something or is there nothing?* In his crucial and final ontology. He struggles against the material whilst materialising the problem, and only then offers an inner solution, or at least an analysis as awakening. He criticises **Nietzsche** as the last metaphysician who is a nihilist precisely in that he is not a nihilist. He, too, therefore recognises opposites within intent. For him this is the **end of history and of metaphysics**, just as for **Fukuyama** or **Bell** it is the end of "ideology" and of history in economic and other rivalries; for theologians, the **end of philosophy** through its personification in Jesus Christ; and so on. But scarcely anyone has taken the "mad" side — the **end of nothingness**. The closed circle of history and of power is for me an unsatisfactory discovery, as is phenomenology. Being is not time, but *non-time*. Time is perhaps only one of Being's horizons, or even tools. This does not mean stasis but *the depth of Being* in its source. **Schluck** holds that: *I think, therefore I participate in the history of Being*. But I think that this "active observation" leads to nothing new. *Being-toward-the-other*, on the other hand, is not *co-being* through any self-cognition about ruin; it is, rather, through one's own self-cognition concerning — Being and life. Even in Christianity this is often misunderstood. It is in truth the "remnant of pure humanity" and the attempt to return to a natural state through various mechanisms of reviving such empathy — although we know the natural state for a human being is a new danger. To be naked is not unnatural — it is also a consolation — but the *process* is unnatural. Death was not the "intention", for life would then be deception and injustice. Of course, the worst of all is *Das Man* and fusion in bureaucratic unity without any stance at all. On that point we all almost agree. But beyond that, everything is in question. Let me summarise my position:

MYSELF — AS AN INFANTILE AQUINIAN OR "PERSONALIST" AND "LOGOTHERAPEUTIC THEOLOGIAN" OF EMPIRICAL ECLECTICISM / SYNCRETISM IN THE DIALECTIC OF THE SUBJECTIVE AND THE OBJECTIVE?

➤ **Nietzsche** shows statics (eternity) within relative (immanent) dynamics, as *perpetuum mobile*

➤ **Heidegger** shows dynamics within statics (allegedly *meditative serenity*)

➤ **Hegel** shows dynamics within absolute dynamics (*totalitarian* dynamics in service of an alleged self-cognition and *List* of the absolute reason and spirit)

➤ **Sartre or Camus** show an *absurd* dynamics within a relative and contingent, ungrounded dynamics — without "foundation"⁶⁶

➤ **Schopenhauer** shows *negation* (of the will) both in dynamics and statics...

➤ **Kant** shows *limits* within formal statics and experiential dynamics

⁶⁶In condensing **Sartre** and **Camus** to a single line in the schema I am, of course, simplifying. By "ungrounded" I do not mean philosophically incompetent — Sartre's *L'Être et le néant* (1943) is a seven-hundred-page system of ontology and freedom — but rather that for both, the *why* of action and value is finally not anchored in anything beyond the human deciding subject itself. For Sartre, "existence precedes essence" and value is conferred by free choice in the absence of a divine guarantor; for Camus, in *Le mythe de Sisyphe* (1942), the only authentic philosophical question is whether to commit suicide in the face of the absurd, answered by a defiance which is itself the ground. My disagreement, made explicit in the section on the Cartesian inversion, is that defiance of the absurd is not the same as the affirmation of life, and that to refuse a foundation outside the deciding subject is already to have chosen one such foundation — the subject — against the others. That is the sense in which I call them "ungrounded".

➤ I show the *coexistence* and development of dynamics and statics, but on two levels and from multiple perspectives. I take the unintelligible postulate of Being / God as a defence against groundlessness, antinomies, and further unintelligibilities or contradictions in theoretical and practical reason. I posit *voluntarism* as the centre of realisation, *mad (but not unconditional) optimism* as the counterpart to a (latent) history of ubiquitous nihilism, and at the same time as the counterpart to the fragmentary truths that revolve mirror-like in circles. *Ontologically prioritised monism* is my bridge and ground of supra-meaning, supra-truth, or merely privation — over against the final and traditional *structural dualism* of life. *Subjective interdisciplinarity* serves me only as the opening of a door to each discipline severally. *Intellect* is like a navigator, neither "primacy" nor "refuse" of our time; and *empiricism* is the key.

Time is not only "relative", in any case, but it is *different depending on the perspective from which it is viewed* — as many have grasped. It is not even an absence in the loss of consciousness; it is only a "cutting through" or a different consciousness up to the passage from *now to — now*. Different also from sleep and the effects of drugs. Our books are produced in time, but we are essentially "outside time" though within it. Time is therefore over-rated; nothingness is also over-rated; and Being has not been forgotten but is rather misinterpreted as sometimes "relative" and dependent. For it can be even without contrast and anxiety. We need not, *nullified* or *non-nullified*, be the *guardians of our own nothingness and shepherds of Being*. We may be only shepherds of Being. *Being, as I see it, alone — has no other side of the coin in essence*. Everything else has: body, state of spirit, health–illness, comfort–discomfort, ruined–created, possible–impossible, imagined–realised, unimagined–unrealised, living–non-living, past–future, forgotten–found, and so on. We merely *think* that there is another side of the coin to Being. Beings and things in fact have two sides of the coin. Indeed Heidegger himself says: Being is not a thing! How can one resist the impression that — **feeling and biology** — are the foundation of his analysis of Being and time. And that, for all my errors in

critique, is insufficient for the position of a philosopher and a citizen whose experience today reaches further.

TIME, therefore, exists and does not exist. We alone — exist. We were not born "in this and that year". We were created, but not "after the beginning of the world". We were — *immediately*. Not always but — *immediately*. We were born *immediately*; in the past, the present, or the future (subjective and objective) — *immediately*! And we are also *at the end*. There we have even more experience than with our so-called death. **We have been created, and we exist.** We are not here by chance, and we "are not those who we are", but we cannot not-exist. This is the only problem of the long history of thinking. When I was twice under ANAESTHESIA — I woke *immediately*. Not in the sense that I had the "feeling" that I woke immediately. Rather, I *did* wake immediately. And I felt no pain, no fear, no knowledge... But neither was I in a temporal void of ten hours of "sleep". This is why anaesthesia is a higher degree than sleep. I was in the present, while the doctors had "remained in the past". Then comes clinical death, and then real bodily death. Clinical death sees both itself and others, but it is more temporal than sleep, anaesthesia, and death. So I was in the present the whole time under the anaesthetic. Whilst those who operated on me were in time. So their truth is also accurate! My grandmother used to sleep for forty-eight hours, and when she answered the phone or when we came to feed her, she would say: **"I have only just fallen asleep — do not wake me!"** That is the point. Her reality is accurate, but so is mine — ours. I had a greater anxiety at her disappearance and severance than she did herself! And so my anxiety is truth and falsehood, but her consciousness was also truth and falsehood. Yet in both cases — *she existed*! She exists beyond death, even if she possesses no knowledge of herself (and not only in my memory and in this book, as my grandfather used to say). But I believe she does have knowledge. And if those mentioned people hear me and see me as I "ramble", this is the SOLE and at the same time IRREFUTABLE proof that I am right, that nothingness as such does not exist. I shall not even invoke *Pascal's wager* — simply, there is no third option. Without the Resurrection, faith and theistic philosophy are

alike in vain, as Paul himself says. Heidegger thinks he knows of nothingness; my grandmother thought she knew of absolute being in a bed — and she did not. Nor does one need to know — for knowledge is not the only proof. Yet truths are not therefore relative and opposite; truths are only *pyramidally complementary and abolishable*. On the other hand, life and society are organised "inversely proportionally". If you have, more is added to you; if you do not have, even what you have is taken from you. That is why what bothers me most is the bureaucratic or small-town struggle at the *foot* of the pyramid. Our life outside time, and our consciousness and thinking and deciding, which will no longer demand time, is some form of *epektasis* still to come, as **Gregory of Nyssa** would say.

"THE DOG" AS PROOF FOR AND AGAINST HEIDEGGER

➤We all know that for a dog time passes more quickly, that it knows nothing of death, and that it rejoices the same after 5 minutes as after 500 minutes following the owner's return. Heidegger would say this is proof that time is the horizon of Being and its temporality as a being. And that the dog therefore does not "possess" time, nor consciousness as we do — we who know that we are losing it.

➤But by the same token this is proof that time is a secondary matter and is not essential for Being. The dog is proof of eternity and fullness, not of the limitation of Being. Its temporality is directed at a goal: at me as the return of Being and of meaning. And it has no *anxiety* either. The dog does not know that it will die — but neither do we. We presume it. We deduce, and see one (questionable) part of the picture. It is even questionable whether the past or the future precede us. This is *part* of the truth, since we are also born again every day; our cells renew, and our attitudes change. But if we view everything as a present that is changing — including ourselves — and our spirit is the only constant (along with the soul), then

both the subjectivity and objectivity of time are not at all essential to whether time belongs to our "most proper concern".

➤ 3. COUNTER-PROOF. Nietzsche laid the foundations of nihilism, existentialism, and the "killing of (Western) God", and yet he, like Heidegger, in fact flees from nihilism, existentialism, and theism alike, holding them all to be imposed. Each offers not only a phenomenological but an existential explanation of how, without security and without God, a true "human being" and "Superman" may be built. This is all action within limitations, like a fish on dry land. That limitation comes from two directions — *what they reproach their predecessors with, and from themselves*. Both in fact operate within **resentment**, for their pessimism is implicit, however hard they try to invert it and show the opposite. If I am wrong: at least I find myself signed beneath the names of **Spinoza**, or **Shestov**, **Deleuze**, and of course **Bergson**, who I see were critics of such premises. By the two mentioned above — nihilism is partner, drama, and something worth additional struggle as a bridge towards serenity. That is the same as saying that there is no struggle, nor any outcome dependent upon it. Both truths are simply incomplete. We fear the uncertain, but the uncertain is a negative concept because we have "imagined" it as such. ***Amor fati*** is no alternative if it is not within the right consciousness and intent. I return to *Anwesenheit*, even though it is of course "overthrown" in Heidegger's own writings. *Being-with* or being-with-the-other towards me as *Dasein*, and the Being of the Absolute towards us all and conversely, I hold to abolish the objective and subjective importance of time which Heidegger emphasises. Not the reverse (except perhaps in certain "physical" laws). Heidegger holds that the *lack in the future* makes us human, whereas to my mind this is a psychological problem into which he himself fell. For Frankl saw precisely the *orientation towards the future and a goal* as the chief sustainer of the will to live and of results. To say that people "look too much into the future" is therefore sometimes mistaken, for presence in the present is also frequently counter-productive. After all, Frankl said that camp prisoners often lived "in the past", but those were precisely the ones who at least "lived", and not the ones who remained in

apathy. In essence, *fullness in the future* makes us human, alongside the process of uncertainty in the present. That we fear uncertainty is the problem both of him and of us. Heidegger offers us a partial solution; others, by contrast, do not even seek a solution in times, and then lose the sense for reality or bury themselves in it. I know only that I had a "weak sense for time" and always ran late, yet I did not "miss the train" on life. I know that timing matters and yet is elusive. *Hachiko* waits like there is no death exactly. He becomes a *living* death or he never dies, nor does his owner.

“AMOR FATI” AND CATS

The example of the psychology of nothingness is precisely the cat about which I spoke — especially the half-wild one. It is focused on itself as both Being and nothingness. It is the closest to the knowledge that death exists in some form. It does not flee from death like the dog, but neither does it grasp it as a human does. The cat lives “amor fati” — the love of fate — as a natural state, not as a Nietzschean ideal we must struggle toward.

There is a longer story behind the philosophical figure of the cat I sketched above — a story I owe both to my dignity as a witness and to the truth of what I observed. For decades, on the seaside, I lived among cats. What I came to understand is that their relations are nearly as complex as ours: the *aggressive* and the *foolish* ones were the first to *fall away* — provoking hostility, exhausting their welcome, drawing the wrong attention. Those who survived were the intelligent ones — like one cat in particular, who returned to us for twenty years, weathering every misfortune. Looking into her eyes felt like conversation. The same kind of conversation, only inverted, that I once had with the eyes of a dying kitten in whose look I could read a single plea: “*I am dying, help me — you who are a higher being.*”

We prolonged the life of the first. The second I could not save. I made the mistake of giving him brandy, which only deepened his panic; in

the morning I found him alone, his legs trembling, and I held his small head while he died. The other cats — whom I had been driving away so I could feed him — neither looked nor registered that one of their own had passed. It was not their present moment. Only the human being has the singular capacity to be *to* the animal what the animal once was *to* the human: a witness, a hand, a presence at the threshold.

There was, too, the dog of my former wife, who died in my arms after dozens of hours of frustration and convulsion. He passed only after I spoke to him: *"I love you. Thank you for choosing me for your play even when I came home the least. I ask forgiveness for having betrayed and disappointed your mistress. Let your sacrifice cleanse my guilt — I shall not do it again."* Then he exhaled and was gone. The cats I love — selfish and pragmatic, though not therefore evil — stepped over his body as one steps over a doorstep. The cat who had once beaten him bore no malice. She did not hate the dog; she hated his *naïveté* — his belief that nothingness would not arrive. His nothingness only confirmed her *reasoning*.

And then there is the episode I have left for last because it carries, in miniature, the whole question of *amor fati*. As children — and later as adults helping the elders — we were sometimes tasked with placing cats into a sack. Not, as one might first suppose, to drown them: a neighbour was said to carry them across the river and release them somewhere far enough that they would not return. Whether this was true or whether it was the rural euphemism for something darker, I cannot fully say; what I can say is what I *saw*. Cats who fight one another mercilessly in the open courtyard — who hiss, scratch, claim every inch of territory — became, inside the sack, *still*. Quiet. They lay against one another without conflict. They did not know what awaited them on the other side of that journey, and precisely because they did not know, they accepted. Their war suspended itself the moment their future closed.

I helped where I could and I held back where I had to. Only once I lost my temper; even then, by grace, I did not injure any of them. But what stayed with me was that strange peace inside the sack — a peace

impossible in the open. It is the very figure of *amor fati* I had been trying to name philosophically: not a chosen virtue, not a discipline, but an animal recognition that the structure of the situation has changed, and that struggle inside it is no longer the form of life. It is not resignation either. The cats in the sack did not despair; they simply ceased to fight one another. Whether this is wisdom or instinct, or the same thing wearing different names, I leave open.

The "radiation" of living beings — the field they emit toward each other and into the world — matters not only inwardly but also outwardly. Yet most of what destroys families and communities is precisely the *inward* competition, the small aggressions, the constant friction that wears down the nervous system of whoever is trying to hold things together. The strength of the *pater familias* — the leader of the pack — is what determines whether the structure holds. My father, in our smaller three-person household, was such an authority: expeditious, perceptive, strong, moral, and successful enough to keep us upright and to raise me with measured strictness. Among the cats on the seaside, when there was no such authority, the same patterns of unrest played out — only in shorter cycles, and without the same recoveries.

This is why I return to the cats throughout, and why the late professor Batovanja — whom I saw walking alone to feed cats in the neighbourhood or sit in a c. bar — is for me a continuous, living interlocutor rather than a posthumous figure. The cat stands on the boundary of being and nothingness, and looks across it without flinching. We stand on the boundary of being and God — that is, of being and *being-towards-the-potential-of-nothingness* — and we look across it most often with anxiety. The difference between her gaze and ours is the entire space of this book.

Where *Nietzsche* held that the highest human achievement is to love one's fate, including all its hardships and repetitions, the cat already lives this without effort or philosophy. It accepts the warmth, the cold, the food, the hunt, the rest, the danger — without the human anxiety of choosing or refusing. Yet this is not freedom in our sense; it is a freedom prior to

consciousness of freedom, or, said differently, a being that has not yet had to choose between Being and nothingness.

For us, amor fati is much harder — because we anticipate, fear, project, and remember. We cannot simply accept fate the way the cat does. But the cat is for me a small philosophical figure of how, in a different mode, an acceptance of life-as-it-is is possible without resignation. The dog runs toward life; the cat sits with it. Both teach us something different about Being. The dog gives me the proof for and against Heidegger; the cat gives me the proof of an embodied amor fati that we lose when we become anxious or depressed — and that we may regain only consciously, with effort and grace.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPATHY AS THE KEY AGAINST TIME AND THE KEY AGAINST NOTHINGNESS

The empathy that often produced fear and a sense of "nullification" in me (and, by extension, anxiety) is in fact the key by which I see that *nullification* — and *nothingness* — quite simply, *do not exist*. Nor does meaninglessness. I did not look upon my dying and slumbering grandmother as a "thing", nor did my perspective negate the primacy of her own subjective time, her being, and her passing. Rather, I *placed* myself in her position and entered it — whilst at the same time remaining in my own, and even taking up the position of others, or of the Absolute (in a perspectival sense). I understood her *Dasein*, and I understood my own *Dasein*, which saw from my own perspective of time, and from objective time, her spiritual and physical condition and a "synthesis" around what was happening to her in full. Here Hegel enters. And if to this we add the objective consciousness of Being — God, or *freely-floating intelligence* — **this in fact abolishes both her truth and Heidegger's, in a certain way**. Not in the sense of exclusion, but of abolition. It does not abolish her autonomy or her perspective. But it abolishes her truth *of decay and non-being* as a

final purpose. She would in any case have changed, and in my eyes she would have remained the same, but she would not, even apparently or really, have ceased to exist and begun to decay — she would simply have — *passed onwards*. And she would not even yet have ceased to exist, nor gone onwards. In suicide, in destruction, and in anxiety, we so far "simulate" death that it looks as if death itself. We pull the image of death towards us. My grandmother, were she to return, would only do the same. As would my grandfather, or my former wife. This is why the resurrection of Lazarus is incomplete and even unimportant. Yet that is not death. Death is not the biological decay of cells. It is the destruction of something that cannot be destroyed: that is, the *uglification* of beauty, of dignity, of growth (which can be present and persist in any age and condition). I am only — **a witness of process and of trans-temporal consciousness**. That is what moves me. Not the idea that I might "touch" *Being and Time* with my broken sentences. I keep the being of my grandmother, the being of my sister's grandfather, of my own grandfather, of myself, of the cat, of my wife — incidentally, not intentionally. But I do not create it, and I do not decide it. And yet I both believe and know that, by my own will, I am *co-deciding* in it. It depends only on them whether they can accept our will and the Higher Will which desires that they live, and live rightly, by some ideal self or ideal type. Eternal presentism is here at the seat of Hegel's dialectic, where I take issue with the speed of fusion with the absolute. We do not develop the absolute; the absolute develops us in love, whilst we develop only ourselves and give praise to it. Through synthesis we are joined to the absolute and to others, but only after death. The process of eternity does indeed begin here, as Jesus too claims, but it does not end here, and it is not essential to the Absolute Spirit — only to us, and to the Spirit which is merely "filled out". Our nature, which is both good and bad in time, gives us the opportunity to develop, to partially change, or to be saved. Not to save life, but dignity, mind, meaning, and the future — or eternal present in love. Precisely because we cannot and need not do this work entirely, we *prove* that we are the "image of God" and of Being, and that He acts within us

unconsciously and through our cooperation. **Absurdity, empiricism, and inclusiveness liberate from "time", from fear, and from hatred.**

Heidegger is too slow — Hegel is too fast! We are both, often. Contrast deepens the good and life, but is not, in my view, a necessary precondition (and was not). In the beginning it was different. It was not bloody either. This is why questions of the primacy of good or evil, life or death, are always with us. And the desire for life is the only one universal to both worlds in which we must live. Spirituality is not only a remedy against depression or in dying, as people put it in their dissertations, but — a path towards truth and a new freedom.

If the dead "hear" me, they are, with me and without me, more alive than before. If my grandfather at my age was only just learning German and mastering so much theory, perhaps I, too, can recognise and master at least some minimum of life-experience, even if readers do not agree, or do not even care. These are experiences which I did not in fact choose, and least of all desire, for an existential or intellectual caprice or peace of mind. Rather, because I myself wished to remain in theory or on the conveyor belt — yet did not succeed. And so I had to (and wished to) return like this.

TIME OUTSIDE TIME

I did not greatly love poetry. But I noticed in poets what is common to all of us — we all stand in some romantic contrast to time: *revolt*, *analysis*, or *sorrow* which underlines and *uplifts* the *other thing*, that is, the longing for *the absolute good and love*.

Yet unlike Dragutin Tadijanović's poems "Long into the Night" and "Turtle-Doves", which I even set to music for my own degree, I am most moved by the next two poems. They are, to my mind, the deepest short forms I have seen, and they are almost entirely unknown.

One is also by the long-lived Dragutin Tadijanović, written long ago at *Brodsko brdo*. The other is a poem by my mother, broadcast on pre-war Radio Knin. Both are transcendent — and also transcendental — for they

celebrate love and time (the present and future before all else, not the past) and transcend it, whether they do so inclusively or exclusively. Love exists — *now* — independently and indirectly of the other person. Or else we know that the longing for that love will be fulfilled in due course, but this does not mean that we wait blindly or force it. It exists physically and metaphysically in that very moment, and our independent love is our strongest *existential and stilling cry* of confirmation of truth and faith. I, too, knew this with my two wives, for example, but I had no patience, faith, analysis, or poem with which to accept then that real love is — *real even while it is absent*. And that all of them, and all things, are real loves. They exist in all my times, and I have been, and remained, a rich man. The only question is — at what are we looking? Today's cloud, or the sun, or both as an *affirmation of life*?

"A soft rain drizzles. The wind sways in the branches. A cloud rises from the abyss. My thoughts fly to thee — Unknown One." D. T., 1960s

"What does that tomorrow's morning hold for me, in my longing for someone who has yet to be..." M. M., 1970s

Waiting a hundred years is no problem if one knows what one is waiting for. Our anxiety is, in truth, "anxiety of nullification" — not anxiety of nothingness. Anxiety is the cause of ruin in many fields, even in gambling and chess. What produced anxiety and depression in me was not loss, but the *fear of loss* and the ego. What is closer always seems more real — a finger looks larger than the moon. This why our wills are in conflict. Psychiatric medicines often treat the *consequence of a consequence* — pain. They treat neither the cause nor even the disorder. A further consequence must therefore be — the bringing into harmony of our two and more wills. *Purification*, or "**purgatory**", is nothing other than the *struggle among wills*, I am convinced. **Hell** is when the wills are undefined — that is, harmonised, but in a negative tendency. "Negative" in the sense that there exists also a *third will of the being* — one which does not permit the absolute lifting and lowering and corruption of essence. Because of it, free will collides with the necessarily determined will. But that

"determined" will not only limits but also *enables* free will! *The state of hell* directly reminds the being, in its *eternal Dasein*, that freedom in fullness of decay is wrong, and that *essence* is working against itself. But it has obtained what it wanted — solitude. It has not obtained — independence and non-existence. And this is what gives it "the right" to rebel. This is why with suicides it is possible for them to end up in heaven, hell, or purgatory — for motivation and guilt are key. And as for my intuition as a quasi-proof, I should cite as an example the poem "*Jama*" ("The Pit") by Ivan Goran Kovačić, which foretold or invoked his own bodily death.⁶⁷ His nonchalance regarding his own safety had revealed itself, in a charming but also dangerous way, long before, when he travelled in the steamboat "*Brod na Kupi*" belonging to my late grandmother and great-grandfather...

"I LOOK, THEREFORE I AM, AND I AM, THEREFORE I AM LOOKED UPON"

This is my ontological postulate, and looking is at the foundation of Observation, Observation is at the foundation of will, love, fellowship, the feast, and all other physical and spiritual actions. Looking, and then immediately Observation, is, in my view, the first law of ontology, epistemology, existence, and the rest. Yet essentially every being or every thing does not always look, or cannot look. So the two theorems are either exclusive or inclusive, in such a way that one always remains. This is my **intuition or direct insight**, however one prefers it. It is a (meta)physical **postulate** which in its **disjunction** confirms that priority and mode of being (especially of the kind below the Supra-Being, or around it and within it),

⁶⁷Ivan Goran **Kovačić** (1913–1943), Croatian poet, author of the long anti-fascist poem *Jama* ("The Pit", 1944, published posthumously), which depicts in stark first-person verse the murder of victims thrown into a karst pit. Kovačić himself was killed in 1943, in circumstances which remain only partially established, by Chetnik forces in eastern Bosnia. The biographical detail of his voyage on my great-grandfather's steamer *Brod na Kupi* is preserved within the family memory.

and the axiom is exclusively experiential — or the fruit of cognition and reflection to this point. Gnoseologically, however, we cannot grasp the limits of our own accuracy or of a wider truth. What I do notice, only, is — spirit as mover, and our sole "rule" which directs body and soul. Because this spirit has infinite tendencies, it is the hardest thing to reconcile among multiple "wills".

➤Being, then, does not "appear" of itself.

➤Potential is at once essence; and existence begins with Observation, not (only) with action.

➤Consciousness is the broader concept; looking and Observation are narrower, primary, and active.

➤Since (Supra-)Being is infinite, potential too is infinite, and *everything* "is", but only that exists and *operates* which is in the will of God and of the human being or being. Both entities, in my view, have the property of will. Potential, essence, and existence do not necessarily have a will. For we have both willed and non-willed entities — **agent and autonomous** beings, and **inertial and mechanical** ones (planets, stones...). In that differentiation and operation, reality is also **dualistic** — as is structure — but total Being is one. Not only is God the prime mover, but will and synergy are too. Will is an essential property of beings and the Supra-Being; law is a property of things.

Supra-Being and *Dasein*, in synergy, create beings and things. But within this whole **quantum theology**, our limitless will is limited. And so there remains — prayer, faith, trust, desire, the absurdity of the God-Man as someone in both dimensions, and so on, in which we can to some degree, concretely or abstractly but more or less honestly and truthfully, encompass with our will the fact that potentials may exist, live, and persist (things, beings...). Here lies our impotence, for our spirit in infinity wanders and wishes finally to encompass that which is infinite. Then, as with me, follow despair, doubt, weakness, or arrogance. For ontology is only a wobbly precognition for action. We may "appeal" to a higher being to take over and encompass that which we cannot, and which we desire — rather

than running again after a border that flees. And we need not, and cannot, encompass everything, for fullness, not endless filling-up like brick upon brick, is what matters. It is a sorrow when fullness begins to empty itself. But it empties itself, again, for itself. Because of the Supra-Being or the God-Man, no one who exists is "un-observed". Nor is one poorer for the fact that one is not observed, formed, or loved by all. I am not poorer because I have no children, or have a poorer book than others. I am, for myself — full, whereas others are only "fuller"; and yet they are, for themselves, full as well. This is why the inclusion of our quantitative standards and doubts is ALWAYS the destruction of our whole world and a surrender. But we all notice that there exists "nullification" (and not nothingness as such, in my view), and we have the right to create, to fill out, to *co-save*, to wish for the return of life — but we have neither the duty nor the capacity to "reach" everything. We can do this only while we "can", and while we have time as an instrument within our limits, whilst thought and love are our only boundless property. They are quantitatively boundless but qualitatively varied. Not everyone offers the same religious, scientific, or humanist love in the same sincerity. Yet true sincerity begins to kill itself, for again we wish to be — God. And so we break the boundary. Spirit falls either upwards or downwards. Precisely the extinguishing of the spark, once things go wrong, is our only possibility — and our anxiety — for *Dasein*, by every logic, is weaker than the Supra-Being. This is why when the spark, as with my grandmother, flares up again, the inertia of the spirit becomes infinite. As after one rising, one rest, one work, or one prayer, inertia automatically pulls upwards. But *inertia* is dynamic. It never stands still. We only do not know that the inertia comes from spirit, but think it comes from our projects or from anything else. We therefore conceal our decision within inertia by — **either fleeing too much from this world, or wishing to remain only in it, or both** — and so burn out. "Passive euthanasia" is nothing other than — *letting bodily death and transition follow their natural course*; everything else is our *decisions* about when life ends, and that is not a good or proper outcome of a spirit that lifts itself up. Right up to the end, spirit can move in all directions. Circumstances here

are secondary and relative. Of course, since our spirit is often in decline, our earthly and uncomfortable death is approaching anyway. So it all looks at times like a nihilistic struggle. Yet to remain in some middle spirit and its uncertainty is to confirm the trend of *natural* decay. The problem is that spirit is not a mathematical sum. So a weak spirit in different phases is something which makes up that average. In old age, spirit is probably often weaker and more denuded in fact. In illness as a "gift", we often fear our own "healthy part" which rages. And on top of all this, "not all that glitters is gold, and vice versa". Nervousness is a bodily problem, but the decision of resistance or surrender is a spiritual problem, and at the same time a problem of division. This is why even a vain struggle for life is sometimes "more valuable" than realism. The problem is not that my grandmother ended, or my grandfather, or my father and others, in such a way that towards the end they oscillated — for so might I — but the problem is if they *decide* to accept the lowest part of their spirit and side with it. Then they corrupt their own "natural" average of mortality and sinfulness, and do not raise themselves above death, but confirm it. That is the only problem in suicide, although the boundaries are subtle — yet they can be seen, known, and felt all the same. As when I had the choice of saving the life of a cat that had scratched me and was ill or dangerous. There ontology stops and everything else begins, and only afterwards can we try to analyse it.

"WE HAVE DECIDED THAT HE SHOULD NOT SUFFER AND BURDEN THE SYSTEM AT THE END" — THE INCOMPLETE TRUTH ABOUT „QUALITY“ OF LIFE AS A MEASURE

This very sentence I heard, again, from a clerk in the course of my own bureaucratic struggles and queueing. It mattered more to me than the conflicts over legal "forms" which I was sorting out. I overheard them speaking among themselves about an elderly person of theirs who had taken this decision. People often look upon suicide as a reasonable and noble act. They do not see the other side — that life has always been of imperfect quality, but that *we* and the Supra-Being give it quality, even through this bureaucratic work. And that in the end this is not just "torment" and leaving the world in its temporary technocratic, material, and impersonal form, but that perhaps it is precisely our own illness and dying which is a *gift for others*. So: "I am ill. If you WISH to care for me, do so; if not, I could then kill myself or die," and so forth. (Yet here, too, we do not know when we are truly abandoned or deceived. That is why there are anticipatory directives, though even those can fail; never mind. Even the *thief* can find his "consolation" and pleasure through such a directive, right?) But we ought also to say: "*Care for me, because you, too, will need care, and someone has cared for you. You are not obliged, but in doing so you build yourselves as better people, and your life will have meaning and be more fulfilled. It is a service — to you, not to me. I am receiving a service, but if I receive it with dignity, I, too, am rich, because together we resist the lie or, more precisely, the incomplete truth of anxiety, or of our pride and selfishness.*" This is the screen for "disposing of" people as waste. And how many community nurses do their work with love. Let us give them their chance. If they are overburdened, let us give them rest and reward, or more incentives for that profession, which is — noble. It is not noble for me to ramble on like this — that is noble! We decide on value, yes, but on a lower one, while swearing upon the higher. At least let us be honest. Had my grandmother, for example, been honest and decided to decay deliberately,

that would have been one thing. But to claim that she "would not burden us", that this is for "our good" — while we are at home, and no one is going to help her, and her finger hurts and her hairdo is bad — that is both an excuse and an extremely important justification for death. And yet she had had a strong spirit in life and even on the threshold of death, since she endured so much in bed, which I could not have. She wasted her health and strength in the wrong direction, and yet had the capacity for much more. But she did not find, and did not *wish* to recognise, meaning in this — unlike my father, who did cooperate; and even my grandfather, in the end, with his gift-deeds and tidying-up of life for us younger ones and some measure of family reconciliation. My grandmother responded to my "I love you" with "I love you", but expressly wished to be alone on the floor and in death. I do not know why; but is this necessarily the ideal type? Are others heroes, or are we merely "losers"? Yet by my Observation alone and by love, I gathered them back into being and turned them "towards me". So that if something happens to me, I have them again as co-saviours, and that is the closed positive circle. The problem is that I already see myself as a great dialectician, instead of the small but essential link in a chain who can do what he can and is willing to do, not what he *must* do. Various theories of mine, my **theoriai** — whether in keeping with **Simone Weil**⁶⁸ or other *immersions* I wish to achieve — are only an expression of my longing: either as proof, or that I am mad and console myself, or that intuition and longing *confirm the existence* of what we claim, and where our heart looks and naturally longs, while we have neither full knowledge, nor instruments, nor strength and will. When **Saint Paul** writes that "we do what we do not wish to" (*Romans* 7:15–20), I think the formulation, though deep, is not strictly correct. Everything we do — we wish to. But our two wills are in conflict, in the sense Harry Frankfurt drew out: a first-order desire (for the cookie, for

⁶⁸Simone **Weil** (1909–1943), French philosopher, mystic, and political activist; cf. her *Attente de Dieu* (1950, posth.) and *La pesanteur et la grâce* (1947). Her concept of *décréation* — the self-withdrawal of God so that the creature may take its place — is a near-exact mystical counterpart to the ontological move I am here trying to make in lay terms.

the drug, for the easy way out) collides with a second-order one (the desire to want differently). And I am not even speaking of further wills above those two. I understand why *I know that I know almost nothing — or rather, I know that I know nothing except that*. I look as far as I can, and I want much, but I am not far-sighted, and so the extension is necessarily provided by other beings and by God. But here we must stop. Spirit corrupts only itself, primarily. Responsibility is therefore the most beautiful and most difficult thing. We must accept the external world, for there is a reason we are in it, and we are formed and become acquainted within it; but we must not accept the fall of spirit, for then we burden those who love us. Yet if it happens, we must equally look upon this as a positive process and a consciousness that it is easier for them to help us than for us to help ourselves. The only and biblical problem is the loss of personal will. This is why Jesus' warning about hell, together with the message that we should fear neither death nor anything else, is a sign that we should look after the spirit and neither tremble nor recklessly destroy it. I in fact — pray to God that my truth be accurate, or that I may come to know and live a better truth. Precisely because I do not negate God but work within my own limits — which are in fact always extending further and further — I adjust truth to my vision, and it becomes my valid truth. This is why people "on the border" of death see colours, worlds, or persons in different ways. It does not follow that all of them are wrong except for the "144,000" of the Book of Revelation (7:4; 14:1) and the apocalyptic traditions that have grown around that number. Truth is not negated, but permitted and given.

"DEPTH" AND ONE "LOGICAL" PROOF OF OUR FREEDOM

The *depth* of our freedom is greater than we think. We complain that it is small, when in fact it is terrifyingly *vast* and *broad*, and places us before a wall of *choice of ourselves: to be most like God and full in our decisions and spiritual delights, or to be robots?* Only then come possibilities and action. Let us first examine the radical lower *possibility*.

Unlike God, who cannot be evil, or unlike good and bad angels or animals, which are likewise "locked" within their own broad possibilities, only the human being as "the image of God" always has the possibility of *breaking through the ontological and moral minimums* and entering the region of — **meaninglessness** (not merely anti-meaning). All people, I am convinced — even angels or other beings — do everything out of some pleasure, principle, defiance, idea, or motive (and this includes sadism and suicide). There is a strong philosophical tradition — running from the *Protagoras* through Aquinas to **Anscombe** and **Philippa Foot** — which holds that every intentional act is performed under *some* description of good or apparent good. I take that tradition seriously, and my counter-claim is narrower than it may appear. I am not asserting that human beings often act without any motive at all. I am asserting only the *theoretical possibility* of that *strike upon purity and innocence* which has *minimal awareness and motivation, which does not wish to prove anything, but only to be, and to do* — that is, to *realise*. We, although we shall probably never do this, and may even think ourselves determined by selfishness or by an ascending altruism, nevertheless — alone — "*can*" do this (*in thought, word, or deed, but in this case not by omission*). We alone can do *pure evil* and break every order, ontology, being, and conscience. We would then be cast away and *forgotten*, but we should be *pioneers of anti-being and meaninglessness*. For there has not been a single being in history, I am convinced, who has struck at *what he loves*, what is pure, and what provokes in him no jealous or aggressive impulse over the weak. If we set aside whether conscience is parallel, subsequent, or absent in such a case, this would be a **metaphysical**

paradox, for it would be *a forgotten crime in history* which would remain as such, while the human being would be "nullified" and probably fall into some indescribable and semi-felt mode of pain and horror. Only, perhaps, the "famous" name of the perpetrator might be known afterwards; but history by that act would not be altered in dynamics and bounds, only in statics. When I speak of striking at what one *loves*, I sharply distinguish this from striking at, or sacrificing, someone's dearest, or the dearest thing we have. Rather, it would be a *work against the self and against nature, and against love as such* (suicide is not, in essence, a work against the self). And again the emphasis is not on nature, nor on the strike against it, but on the phrase "*as such*". This is the breadth and depth that shows how boundaries are set, but how they can be pushed away and deepened. We can even create *precedents* by destruction. Yet that **supreme proof of freedom** is, in itself, *meaningless*, for it would change nothing — only *realise the possibility*. We should not do this for our own gain, nor for the proving of ourselves against God, the world, or existence; for then we should be like the "devil", (self-)murderers, and ideologues. We should do it only for the sake of *the act as such* and *the possibility as such*. The act would not prove Being, nor shake it. It would *offend the rule* and itself *suffocate* in it. It would prove what we know — that we *have freedom both upwards and downwards*. The human being is **ontologically more powerful than the devil** (alone?). Our range can produce *instability and division within ourselves*, but it can also produce a **radical indeterminacy of human will, were the will to be decisive and directed against itself and law, or even directionless**. Besides the destruction of the innocent, we can also persuade and draw innocent souls with us into "hell", urging them to acts of evil of any degree — which has, of course, happened. Is this not proof of freedom? **The dark side of human freedom** is in fact its greatest **proof**, but not through *modalities*, rather through: **the partial and potential unpredictability of human nature in its irrationality, or its rational irrationality. The human being is the measure of the worst evil, not the devil**, for, weak as he is, he holds the **paradox of power**. He can realise that paradox through **moral, existential, and almost reasonless destruction in**

the destruction of his own will, *logos*, and essence, through that **ontological suicide** (or its attempt). No one would admire it, but it is possible as a *possibility*. It is a *parasitic influence on Being*. To be a parasite is a great freedom in this radical view and argument of mine, but my call to action is, of course, the reverse: let us go *radically upwards*, not to topple God or society from the throne. Hence what is said above is *below* the level of **curiosity, disobedience, infidelity, or unlove**, which are the fundamental triggers of pride and evil in the world. And only after those come *higher and at the same time shallower* degrees of evil, *but with less awareness of cause*: lust, selfishness, various impulses, additional consequences and revenges, illnesses, and all other forms of "dying" and dividing of persons and of nature.

THE OTHER, OR LAST, QUESTION OF ALL QUESTIONS

The main question has always been evolution or creation. Or, if both — what has primacy: entropy or *syntropy*. And we can extend this to questions of value as well. What truly stands out in the story is hard to determine. People who favour one extreme forget the **10% rule** in the food chain — predators against herbivores, herbivores against plants — and the whole ecosystem which still functions. But how does it function? In such a way that, unlike the first law of thermodynamics, most often invoked by advocates of reincarnation, pantheism, and the rest, the second law tells us that — **entropy** and disorder is what largely wins and creates the rule, while every *syntropy*, every progress or reproduction, is an exception.⁶⁹

⁶⁹The opposition of *syntropy* to *entropy*, as I deploy it in this book, has its scientific echo in the work of the Italian mathematician Luigi Fantappiè (1942) and was given philosophical-biological development by Albert Szent-Györgyi. I do not import the technical claim that organic systems retroactively pull themselves towards a final cause; rather, I use *syntropy* as the name for the principle of order and meaningful coordination which manifestly does operate against the otherwise dominant tendency to disorder, even if its statistical weight

Yet on the other hand, at the beginning of the universe entropy was at an extraordinarily low level — almost non-existent. *Syntropy* bordered on a probability that any such thing could arise, closer to zero than to anything above it. As we see throughout history, pure humanity is no longer possible, and even pure violence against biology means that there exists no *law of the stronger* but rather a *law of balance* (across sexes, beings that reproduce proportionally and disproportionally in order to survive but also decay towards eventual balance, and so on). What sort of balance is it in which blood is only metered out? In which philosophy, theology, art, cooperation, love, or anything similar might in truth be merely in the service of self-deception, and only one of the evolutionary and biological tools of more successful self-preservation? What is exception to what — no one knows, and I do not either. The question of the prime mover is no longer essential, so as not to be repeated. With us there exists no "forgetting of God", no question of what God is, what the universe or the universes are. The question is still burning — *who are we?* *Syntropy*, even if in the minority, *disturbs* the broader law and even uses entropy. And that exception — *becomes or confirms a rule* (of general laws and of perfection that is hidden behind these clouds) according to some combination of objective physical and value-related laws.

Such pure *syntropy* or active empathy would lie in the answer to the question of our free will:

➤If we could choose between living *ourselves* or living for *the other*, our instinct would say — *ourselves*. Statistically speaking, not much in the universe would change. One particle against another. Fifty-fifty. But our mind would think of both options. If we were to decide to sacrifice ourselves so that the other might be alive and happy, knowing that someone has to pay the price for both ourselves and the other, we should set a precedent which steps out of the statistic. Regardless of whether we held out in that decision only for a few minutes and then again decided in

is small. I make no claim against the second law of thermodynamics, only against its philosophical use as a hidden ontology of despair.

favour of ourselves — or whether we decided five times for ourselves and once for the other. Yet this, in my view, ought to be without any wish to be "noble", to change the law, to suffer, or anything else. It should be a neutral decision, and only then would it have value. Yet the act of reasoning, and the fact that we are perhaps a "rational animal" — as in the first concept from the philosophy lesson which the teacher wrote on the board — means that we cannot necessarily be "robotic", or purely empathic, biological, or purely spiritual. We must judge our decision in some way *valuatively*. Our reason is itself a *valuative*, not merely observational, vessel.

By this, values and mind not only shape or confirm the rule that mind is above statistics or does not know the whole statistic — they necessarily place us before a wall. Do we, or do we not, want life? Do we choose, or do we not choose, life, love, knowledge — or choose the opposite? The human being is the eternal rebel against everything, against order and against disorder. Our division between reality and intuition tells us that here, probably, we are dealing with a **transit logos**. For according to some research, the stomachs of beasts (and perhaps of humans) were not always carnivorous. And **Thomas More's** *Utopia* (not in *Mannheim's* sense) might perhaps be possible — just as is the strange link between him and his "character" in the film,⁷⁰ which in my youth represented for me all the longings and beauties of the world and of love, and which subconsciously accompanies me as I watch dear actors and their ideas pass into history's lumber-room. Then I often wonder how something so inexplicably deep stands on my shoulders, that I am to guard it from "oblivion" and give it the importance against which every part of my being resists — that this would mean a return to the fissure of nothingness. If I say that I do partially agree with **Nietzsche** that art is the solution and our maximum, or with the Romantics, who have drawn me for so long — even when I asked my grandfather on holidays whether they were truly "self-sufficient" — then I

⁷⁰The reference is to Fred Zinnemann's film *A Man for All Seasons* (1966, screenplay by Robert Bolt from his own play), in which Paul Scofield played Thomas More. The film won six Academy Awards including Best Picture.

depart from every pure psychology or philosophy into what is the fundamental law of joy and progress: *play and love in their fullness*. The effort to combine the two is in itself effort, not pure play. And effort is something outside pure good, for pure good is light. Perhaps **Percy Bysshe Shelley** is right that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world".⁷¹ If anyone reaches the end of this book, they will know that my only *tear* at this moment is what creates authenticity. Whether it is the authenticity of madness, unreality, division, sadness, confirmed anxiety, and the negation of reality? Or a tear which creates. A tear which is the mover. A tear which affirms and sees depth as against height. Which confirms knowledge, hope, love, faith, lucidity. Yet my thesis still stands — *evil does not create a stronger good, and still less is its precondition*. A flash which leaps down and then up burns out and does not last long. Though it has depth, it is not the only mover. **Forty per cent of energy — and sometimes as much as ninety per cent — is spent on various forms of entropy**, even if alongside there is *syntropy* from various sides. Yet in the long run — only *enduring syntropy creates the exponential and the surplus of energy and success*. I conclude, therefore: *this world in transit is not the fullness of reality*. The fullness of reality is either in the final rupture or in the final union which existed at the beginning or shall be at the end. The law of entropy is stronger, but linear. More is spent, and more rapidly, than can be created. Only with an enormous quantity of energy and a repeated miracle can *syntropy* triumph not only qualitatively but quantitatively, and realise its exponential potential. More buildings were built in cities after the war than were destroyed, but more slowly and with greater difficulty. Defiance of entropy is not because of resistance to the inevitable; it is because both *quantitative and qualitative laws* are on the side of creation — yet we no longer have enough *instruments*. The only instruments are cry, love, and creativity. But not in order to fill in this *short fissure in nothingness of matter that surges strongly towards itself* — rather, to seek

⁷¹Percy Bysshe **Shelley**, *A Defence of Poetry* (written 1821, published posthumously 1840): "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

and to return the *fullness of Being* into this and every universe, and into ourselves above all. *Entropy feeds on syntropy and at the same time helps it.* Here one can grasp the logic of the demonic and of the lesser truth. This is why the *horizontal* collision with it is often mistaken, for it wins. We may at most "use" entropy as a torrent, just as it uses us as relatively solid buildings. But the goal is always, after some slalom, to depart into *the heights* and into the *vertical*, so that synthesis may *save us ourselves* and at least in part those who almost do *not wish* it. Entropy has far greater peace, comfort, and calculation (cause-and-effect, like the *Merovingian*), but does not see the absolute principle and the mutual necessity. Spirit, by fortune or misfortune, changes and produces confusion and anxiety (in others and in oneself). But the fear that spirit is mortal, in a state where it is growing maximally, is the last kind of anxiety and lie. The peace which entropy holds rests on the momentary; the peace which *syntropy* holds rests on the eternal. Since the momentary is closer than the eternal, the *illusion* of peace and unrest is created. Entropy has the stronger formula but must spend equal — and in the long run greater — energy to prevent the growth of *syntropy*. Here this wall is felt. *The spirit works against the body, and the body against the spirit*, and one must add a third register: *spirit also works against itself*. Here the question often is whether we are at the peak of development and evolution, or have passed it, or are awaiting it; but the question of *to be or not to be* is in my view, in the end, in fact — *to be or not to wish to be*. Being is, in truth — play. But doubt and love for what is easier are what disturb the picture of *what is source and what is choice, what is finite and what is infinite*. Even should it recognise that it is infinite and powerful, spirit is yet imperfect and dependent on the Supra-Being and on wills. This is why our spirit is unstable: it is *not even in development*; it receives hollow cognition, but its will and existence only *return* towards the natural — *growth in fullness* and the upper limit of realised and created potency. We can therefore not even reach the beginning of true being in this life — and there alone our anxiety is true. For we have turned our spirit — *against ourselves, against others, and against the Supra-Being*. We have broken every order. And it is for this reason that we now need all those

components for order to be restored. So self-help and self-realisation alone are not enough, nor are the help of others, nor only the help of the Supra-Being. Precisely here lies the link, and the difference, with other spiritualities. They all resolve only one facet, and are blind to another.

THE THIRD DEATH

I mentioned the average of around **120 years** which epigenetics and other disciplines have calculated as the figure for *natural death*. This is the so-called **Hayflick limit**.⁷² The rest is usually an "acceleration" of the process and that argument of mine for early "suicide". For not even genes are decisive — though they make things easier — when they can "fail to activate" if the person is not constantly under distress. My wife, too, worked with narcissistic invalids who did not show it, and even came to love one of them. We saw, both she and I, that character emerges and is amplified in illness, but that there is no necessity that an invalid must have a greater frustration leading to a fall of spirit and to the creation of dementia, neurosis, and everything negative.

When viewed Christologically, the question is: "If everything in our spirit remains decisive, why an external saving of body and soul?" Jesus entered all *three deaths* not because he had to (theologians agree) but because he wished, factually, to show and resolve the question of death. He himself, on account of his short separation from the Supra-Being, did not go into the

⁷²The *Hayflick limit* — named for the anatomist Leonard Hayflick, who demonstrated in 1961 that normal human somatic cells divide some 40–60 times before entering senescence — is widely cited in popular literature as setting a maximum human lifespan of roughly 120 years (e.g. the current record, Jeanne Calment, 122). It is striking that the same figure appears in Scripture: *Genesis* 6:3 — "yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years" (KJV). Hayflick himself, in interviews late in his life, denied ever having proposed the figure of 120 years as a hard biological ceiling. I deploy the figure here in the popular, not the strict, sense: as an order-of-magnitude indication of the natural span, with the convergence between cell biology and the ancient text noted as an interesting parallel rather than as a proof either way.

void. He entered precisely the **ontological minimum**, and his perfection is the ticket to "eternal life". And this is the ticket which we can take or not, just as he himself could have given it without the cross and without his own example. For the smallest problem is in fact "miracle" and healing — the inner mover is what matters. When I say three deaths, these are: spiritual, soulful, and bodily. He himself was that "his spirit was willing" and did not fall, but he showed "self-renunciation" and strength of spirit in weakness, in selflessness, in suffering and in love. In the soul-death his own soul did not die, but he drew near to dead souls. With my "third death" what is meant is neither the first (necessary bodily death rather than a smooth passage) nor the second (spiritual refusal of life after the resurrection), but the third — the *killing before its time* of what we have received by inheritance.

Hell would in fact appear easier without God and without the Supra-Being. For pride is a shield that produces *anaesthesia*. "Tunnel vision" in suicide, in addiction, and in the geriatric "stubborn" outbursts — like those of my grandmother's friends in the home who threw excrement at one another — would be psychologically easier, because they paradoxically *affirm life-energy* and give *consolation* and a sense of *selfhood*, power, and control. It is psychologically easier to bear *hell in hatred* — though the cognition of ruin is killing — than *agape* and sacrifice in love, innocence, and surrender, if there is no *meaning* and no support in God and Resurrection. *Logotherapy* or theology is not merely consolation and possibility, but a key piece of the mosaic. Were it otherwise, this would be pure *masochism* and lie, and Nietzsche would be absolutely right. But then every nihilism and existentialism is — MEANINGLESS, however much they strain to claim the opposite. For suicide is then not a victory or a refusal of responsibility, but the *free and personal return into nothingness* into which all will enter, including those whom one has wounded by that act, who can again temporarily recover. The only question would then be whether we have the right to deny a future to someone who wishes to live in that flash. My answer is a counter-question: "How can I possibly control the future of life and reproduction when, as a relatively healthy young man, I was not factually able to fertilise an egg? It did not work naturally or artificially, and

I did not wish to force it. And my girlfriends either *could not* or *would not* conceive with me." So if I cannot influence positive reproductive outcome, I have no responsibility for the negative side either. In that case my own suicide would be the absolute act of confirmation of freedom and of my state. Especially if it were proven that I have no chance of reproducing. As things stand, I have no heirs for most of what I have, who would wish to inherit it. My life and my property will only scatter like a drop in the sea, if there is no *supra-meaning and Supra-Being*. Whom do I deceive with theology, and whom do the existentialists deceive with "personal" meaning? These are equal problems. But I — choose the former. The last image confirms this: the wish of a child which I read in an altar prayer book. The child wishes — *grandmother to live long*. And by that the child means physical life, but subconsciously also spiritual and soulful life. We all share this impulse from a young age. Another person complains of illness, yet also wishes "freedom" from gambling-addiction. I have experienced this already, and have filmed it, as one of the most dangerous killers and triggers of suicide. And in fact it is not an anaesthetic — but a desire for life and play, which is at the foundation of life.

BIOCENTRISM VS. BIOPOWER — THE QUESTION OF ANOMALY

TODAY'S STATE COMPARED WITH THE TOTALITARIAN STATES

Whilst we have spoken of biocentrism and of spirit as, in my view, the basic mover of life (and the Bible too speaks of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, and so on), on the other side we have pointed to **Foucault's** philosophy, which supports my own experience with the apparatus, especially when I "fled" from a secondary school (as a teacher, not as a pupil), because I could not endure all the administrative and pedagogical demands and tests, after I had already "finished my martyrdom" through 10,000 hours of legal study. Or the example when I was not allowed even to urinate while the police completed their "work" at a petrol station, where I had "suspiciously" stood and lingered, typing on my phone about matters important to me, while a raid was being carried out to check fuel. I was interested in the reason for the delay, while they were not allowed to give it. I was interested in ontological questions, while they were interested in technical and practical ones. I was in fact less afraid of them than they were of me, though I was in the minority. With my calm and disinterest I held a "good position" spiritually, but it was nevertheless not all the same to me. On the other hand, the police are genuinely civil — especially when they let me go. But that attempt to deny me a basic human need, or to watch over me as I urinated (as in detention) lest I should perhaps "do something", is not something I attribute to *Foucault's* theory of **biopower**. It is a matter of differing interests. The state apparatus is therefore not a spiritual apparatus, and it cannot enter into "philosophies", although it draws upon them as the foundation of its creation. Yet its basic task is **the control, and even the saving, of the spirit** of the mass and of the individual. Of course, no one's interest can be saved, so priority must be weighed. But if control over discipline serves the control of spirit (which is the most powerful and most unpredictable thing) and in the end of life, this is in fact from **the fear**

of the giant before the fly. Today it is to be noticed that liberality is far greater, as is the prescribed police discretion. Yet this **normalisation** of life and statistics means, as *Foucault* puts it, "**the governing of lives and management of lives, rather than the rule of death and threat of death of the old sovereign**".⁷³ After all, abolitions today are everywhere. I also concluded, on the very first session of my postgraduate study of international relations, that society and the state are in short an organism which "defends itself", whether legally, by transgressing limits, or by defending itself less. But it has the instinct for self-preservation, like an artificial intelligence — it has self-consciousness but lacks emotion. The aim, of course, is to keep *our* emotions under control so that — *the purpose of both state and individual* should be fulfilled and conflict not produced. For we are both selfish and generous, both the state and we. My own line has always been — *we are the state, not "the state is I" (or they)*. It is the same variant, but with a different logic that one ought to know, and which is not even a step downwards. If the state threatens with force or with fines, it is rarely the best response to engage it on an equal footing, even where it has no full reasons. Then it is in truth best to "cooperate", to enable it to fulfil its purpose more easily (to say, "do what you must"), precisely because we are to it a "subordinate number", and because in the end the higher governs, and ultimately the people. And it is best for us because we must be aware that no one can replace our *spirit* except ourselves, and that we are largely to blame for, or to credit with, our spiritual and real happiness and unhappiness. Our spirit is our greatest capital. The question is how we shall use it, or whether we shall look upon the external world which is only a mirror.

⁷³Michel **Foucault**, *Histoire de la sexualité I: La volonté de savoir* (1976), and "*Il faut défendre la société*" (Collège de France lectures, 1975–76). The shift Foucault describes is from the sovereign right to *take* life or *let* live, to a modern administrative regime concerned with *fostering* life and *disallowing* it to the point of death. The formulation I paraphrase here is from the closing chapter of volume one.

Indeed, *today we are in fact more **numbers** and more **dehumanised** than under totalitarian regimes — yet in the service of profit, freedoms, humanisation, and prevention of the collapse of states such as those that have existed before us.* But this is logical. Earlier there existed *greater degrees of humanisation within dehumanisation, and the individual or group member had a greater "significance" as such.* Of course, greater significance in the sense of enmity or elimination — but precisely that! Today there are no great enemies, no great victims, no great class, religious, or national struggles. Everything has come down to — the mass and the enormous struggle within the individual and among individuals on a psychological basis. It is even easier and more amicable to cooperate with the state if one accepts its logic and does not provoke it. The proof is that in that cold apparatus I saw humanity, and they saw it in me. That is, in fact, an **anomaly** — something which ought not even to be. Or a statistic — that I got more than I expected and asked for, or that I have been lucky with the state, with society, with women, and with whomever. Of course, the very point is that rights and duties are not commerce; they are what they are. Our illusion is that the state gives or takes from us. It comes to the same thing as price-rises in inflation, but our psychology is always buried more in itself, protecting us in the short term rather than liberating us in the long.

When they "examined" me at **Jankomir**⁷⁴ — in the sense of intelligence, and whether I appeared in keeping with my abilities and education — the question arises: why? Not in order to see whether I am clever or not, and either laugh at me or praise me. Rather, because I am an **anomaly** — that is, out of step with the aims of society. The aim of society is not only to fill quotas and ensure that the best third graduate, and that for the most demanding fields the best tenth and twentieth do so, which is even

⁷⁴The reference is to the psychiatric hospital at Jankomir, on the western outskirts of Zagreb (the Vrapče complex, formally Klinika za psihijatriju Vrapče). The detail of the examination, including questions about the frequency of intimate relations and about same-sex inclinations, is factual; the procedural reasoning behind such questions in a psychiatric intake assessment is a separate matter from whether they are experienced as intrusive.

consistent with natural *meritocracy*. The aim is in truth to *employ* those same persons for the benefit of the state and society, and at the same time for their own happiness — since the state is not "stupid" and knows that a human being needs spiritual happiness, not only food. They even provide food, in order to ameliorate the "unhappy spirit" which can be a danger to itself or to others. Yet there is a remarkable **reversal** when someone like me does not view this as a fall of spirit, but as an opportunity for growth — receiving in effect a salary for the free development of spirit! Furthermore, I do not write against the human being or against society, but channel my knowledge and energy. Yet what attracts people to the book is precisely the fact that I am — an exception, or present myself as one. The fact that I write moderately and dialectically about problems does not interest anyone — I am neither interesting nor dangerous. I am not against myself, against others, or against society; I only analyse eternally. Who cares about that? People love poles, and the state not only loves but — *must have everything filed in drawers*. So every *anomaly*, I would not say bothers them, but they do not know why it has arisen and what its aim is. It is strange to the state that educated people and those without a criminal milieu end up unstable and unsuccessful. They even see it as their own failure. And the priest asked me — "But how is it that you do not work? If you have a degree, that means you can and do know how to work." In Zagreb one does not "buy" diplomas or examinations, as some used to think. Even in my grandfather's time, 95 per cent of professors no longer knew him, nor would they have been of use to me, and he had been a "regular" guest at law school when he visited friends. But precisely because of those acquaintances he did not wish to graduate in literature under those same colleagues. That gap is strange to them. I managed to graduate, to marry, to find employment — and then suddenly chaos? So they search for causes, patterns of psychological borderline-ness, of instability, the root in childhood, anything. They ask me how often I have relations with my wife, or — what is worse — they ask whether I have ever had *same-sex inclinations*?? Is this curiosity or procedure? What has it to do with my psychosis? Or the birth of a half-sister, which the priest thought was the key to my depression after the

failed examination and my obsession with films and girls back in 2010? What does it have to do with anything? Perhaps potentially or distantly, but they dig through even the greatest banalities to resolve the puzzle. How is one to say — this person has not fallen out of reality, he merely experiences it too deeply and too broadly? I even said that I do not "hear voices", but that when I talk to myself, I imagine I am talking to someone — rather than answering myself. I also said that I had been praying the Rosary (which I had), but they had noticed me smiling to myself in the corridor and had already set up the questionnaire. Well, I smile because my mother, too, "gives herself orders", venting through laughter or tears, so I too clearly have the genes. But that unconscious part is entirely secondary and even liberating; the problem is the conscious. So my psychosis was not an unconscious matter. It was a conscious one. The only thing I did not calculate was what I should do when I cooled down: why should I burden the system and myself, will we help each other or not. In the end it turned out well — even better than if I had remained anonymous and officially unchecked. I should have had even fewer rights. But precisely this: *I did not manipulate; I was not without fear of society, and I was not unconscious that what I was saying and doing was not "normal"*. That turned out to be a stroke of luck, and an indicator that — society thinks even of people like me, and that it is better to come forward and cooperate than to fall into real trouble, and so on. But the problem is still that there is too little mutual knowledge and willingness to set everything into a formula. I, too, had a formula — *graduate and marry, and all shall be well*. I lived in that hope for a long time, but I also knew it was possible that things would now be "harder", which none of us at the faculty had wanted to accept either. It is not, in fact, harder — it is *different*. But my suicidality even appeared at the peak in 2016, because I knew that climbing further from that summit is hard. I had "barely" reached that point and could only fall, and beyond physical activity and attempts at academic work I had neither the will nor the motive to do the kind of work for which that diploma or workplace had prepared me. Either it was too intense and exhausting, or too emotional with hard decisions, or too dull. So the reward for the diploma turned out

to look — like a punishment. After all, only then did I come, with a freer spirit, into the elite, where I was worse, and the agony was greater than at the faculty, where (contrary to expectation) I was always *better* than two-thirds of those who in the first place did not understand the subjects.

What is better, then — to be last in the city or first in the village? With that question my suicidality appeared. Although I often linked it to God and spiritual obstacles, I in fact understood that the problem is neither in the system nor in people, who cannot have "non-aligned" elements; rather, the problem lies in my own stance towards life and society. Now that stance has matured, even though my position is neither better nor worse. They even noted that I do not fit any "typical psychological profile" and that further investigation was needed. But when they judged that I was in fact in partial recovery and had "withdrawn", a long period of peace followed. For I am aware that I, too, am no example, and not someone the system rejoices in, however "small" the budget figure may be. When, for instance, I transferred my father's savings (since he is ill) into the bank, together with my grandmother's after her death, the system immediately detected a suspicious origin and demanded all my tax records, although I am not — a taxpayer in any matter. I had helped my father independently in an apartment on the coast when he was active, and had invested more than I had received. But that did not matter as much as their suspicion that we had concealed who the true "owner" was, and how many guests and how much money we had earned. For no one expects someone to remove the savings from the house and bring them to a bank. Where does that money come from in an educational family? And the savings are not even particularly large; rather the contrary. But my way of thinking has always been — **I shall not be your slave, nor do I wish to dominate you** (only myself). That empathic approach is, at least in my example, the best, and it draws on the benefits of the modern system, in which there are indeed more freedoms — but also more responsibilities, and more (lack of) knowledge. The problem is that I know that with bureaucracy it is best to face the problem squarely and resolve it transparently (not to say to satisfy it). But that takes strength. Yet that is my pay and my work in

unemployment. You cannot have both the sheep and the money. The important thing is to be honest with yourself and others, for it has always paid more than the lie. Lying and real instability frighten people far more. This way they even regard you as an equal; the other way they either pity or hate you. When I said that we have no grave number for my grandmother or solution for the car, and that we were transferring the obligation to social services, after three weeks all the institutions revolted and rang (the police, and the police rang me)... Because they did not know what was happening, and as they themselves admit, they had not encountered this. Am I to go to prison, for example, simply because I passively do not fulfil an obligation for which the state has the legal solution of a state burial, but which is rarely required? In any case, a fine or imprisonment would not solve the problem. But the system never expects one to act in weakness — it always sees calculation and a threat to control and to the cohesion of the system. And it sees this well. Yet if there were more exceptions, they would become the rule. We, although under social welfare — paradoxically — are nevertheless seen as having enough money and health (though that itself is in question) to organise an "ordinary funeral". And that a hundred rules and responsible persons have changed across counties, and that everything has gone up in price, while we genuinely have new illnesses, does not concern them. For we are not a "typical" social case off the street whom they would bury anywhere (perhaps even with joy, and "quietly"); we are a family that still counts several members, that has income — even if unenforceable — and lives in its own flats. That to them is suspicious, and they did not know what was going on. That is the *short circuit* of bureaucracy in which there is no malicious intent on any side, but there is a large gap and something new. As with the renunciation of real estate. This is now refused because it has become "too frequent", though for much less valuable real estate than ours. Earlier it would have been either accepted or refused, since it would be either "without suspicion" or "all suspicion". For renunciation in itself does not mean that one is too weak to control that property, that it is unwanted, and that it is beneath one's dignity to sell off the inheritance at a distance; rather, the renunciation is governed by the logic that the property

— *is not worth it, or is problematic*. If we wish to "throw it away" into the state's lap, why should the state not, for the same reason, refuse it? That is the point. People do not see that I, through failure, illness, or deaths which I have witnessed in such abundance, have come to see beyond the framework (which both pleased me and frustrated me). They see that it is in the *nature of human selfishness and interest* not to renounce money or a house, not to save but rather to take on debt, and so on. They reason that it is easier to work than to walk around hospitals, and they do not understand whether I am genuinely mad, pretending to be mad, finding it hard, or finding it too easy. And I do understand the system here, for it really is an anomaly which sees spirit as standing even ahead of matter. But not because I have become a benefactor — rather, because I have seen that spirit is the only thing that is decisive. Earlier I lived perhaps too theodically and wished to flee from matter; now, however, whether I have matter or do not, I in fact know my spirit is independent. Sadly, it is dependent on this world, and perhaps fortunately, for I can use it for both worlds (which is not easy), but it is no longer tamed and frustrated by material needs. Yet few people wish to believe that material needs are not decisive, and no one thinks that a normal person would put material interest and even his own freedom behind spiritual struggles and knowledge. For, after all, how would I write the book if I had nothing material? Yet that is just what people do not see — I should not be writing it! My grandfather would have remained at the railway station as a homeless man, and he would not have killed himself or protested. He would have been sorrowful, as his own mother had gone grey overnight when they had cancelled one of his faculties, but he would not for that reason have been a *revolutionary*, for he would only have turned the vicious circle. He was aware of that, and was not in bitterness or hatred, but accepted reality and the relativity of everything except spirit. He simply accepted this more through reason and ratio, and I a little more through experience, romance, and spiritual struggle. But despite the falls which I elaborate in this book, we are in fact ready in truth for everything, because we have seen everything (not literally every torment, but every existential position). And then a person cannot, even if

he wishes, hold on to matter; nor are we attached to a book, to the birth-rate, taxes, or anything else. Rather, we hold on to spirit, AWARE that we have no proof that it is eternal and works in the way we think. But — if material things, a stabilised spirit, and the system are extended to us, we shall again be productive. We do not revolt, we wait, we Observe, we are active or passive. But this is the *Franklian principle*. He occupied himself the whole time with himself and with his patients, his "comrades" or fellow-prisoners, and not with the system — neither his own, nor the national, nor the ethnic, nor the Nazi and totalitarian. He, too, was therefore "an anomaly" which was strange to both systems. But which is attractive, because through **non-revolution** it investigates life and gives instructions for survival. Those who have mastered spirit or matter to the end perhaps have no need of instructions. For whom, then, do I write — for those who are my equals? I do not know. I write for — truth in one variant of it. I write for analysis, synthesis, and above all — *pure humanism*, even as a normative and life-aim of survival, both for me personally and for the whole species, and for every society which is not absolutely corrupted... survival through depth, hope, and truth.

FINAL GENERAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONCLUSIONS, AND WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?

Since I come from a family that has endured, or has been on the side of the winners, and has had the "time" to analyse reality and look at things from the heights or from the depths, I have nevertheless noticed that the mark of all of us throughout history (going back to the Venetian Republic and earlier) is that we are *non-revolutionaries*, and only to a degree dissenters. If we have belonged to a system which was not so called or so considered, we have within it been an *anomaly*. Not because we wanted to overthrow it, or because we were people of hidden intentions feigning freedom and a position outside everything — but because *we sought*

freedom, since no age has offered eternity. Setting aside the Christian faith, no norm throughout the history of our homeland in the community of *Lokva Rogoznica*, or in Zagreb and around it, has lasted eternally and offered eternal truth. This was no reason for defeatism, but because we did not wish to be slaves or sycophants (first of all to ourselves and to our illusions) and we kept a free and independent spirit, we were a strange anomaly that was even appreciated but always left in quarantine, as something not yet to be resolved. That is a good, but not entirely happy variant. Rather, we have wished to fit in and did fit in, but our persistence has, alongside respect, always carried the question of how it is that someone like that survives or perishes — or neither does nor does. That is *neutrality without explanation*. It is the reason we are interesting; but in a world ruled by love, technology, and fear, we pass through their radars, or below them, or rarely above. And it is the destiny of all those, what I might call **Socratic** types, who have remained consistent with themselves and with peace, and who have not "killed themselves". We do not in fact wish to attack the system, even when it might be against us, because we precisely stand for stability and for the example of how to keep peace, reason, and dignity in every system, in relation to every other person, and to oneself. Socrates held, by contrast, that *ignorance* is the key to wrong choice and to the choice of evil, since a human being would not go against himself if he knew something to be bad. (This is the strong intellectualist line of the *Protagoras*; in the *Republic*, Plato will already complicate it by introducing a tripartite soul in which the appetitive and spirited parts may overcome the rational. I take Socrates here in the strong, *Protagoras*-form, in order to disagree with him at his strongest.) I, too, used to think this way. But then came the counter-question — of freedom, of the impossibility of absolute knowledge, of mistrust of God or system if we look at everything only consequentialistically (which means selfishly and calculatingly), and the possibility that we choose evil even when independent — out of an almost *absolute privation*, or *absolute principle*, however one looks at it. So in my view, knowledge minimises evil, and light is stronger than darkness even though "smaller", but there always remains a *minimal voluntaristic or*

volitional dimension to the human being, who must see the difference between good and evil through consequence, through action, and through Observation of his own nature and inner "moral norms and laws". Observation is the key, then, even because *anxiety* exists. When I say it does not exist, that is only an attempt at looking behind the picture, or in reverse. But I cannot hide the fact that I know nothing, and that I am still afraid, even though I have experience of the past and of success and of order or of love in society. But if the *anxiety of death and nothingness* is rejected — and I dismiss it in this work as a premise — some anxiety nevertheless remains. Of what? If my thesis has logic, then within it lies the remaining anxiety — *anxiety from fear of the fall of spirit, and anxiety of meaninglessness. That, I take it, is the right place to land.* It is the only resolution which shows I am not a utopian using logic and experience to "invent" reality and theory. So — our spirit is in truth subject to dynamics and corruption or to lifting, and every stability or instability must lie in dynamics. Even when stationary, it is dynamic. That is why both madmen and normal people have the same nature of spirit, but a different dynamic by frequency. We fear the fall, conscience, guilt that we are to blame for our condition and the condition of others, and of course we fear every small pain — but not even bodily pain, although it is an important part of being. The second and final key thing, and not far from Frankl and *logos*, is that we fear — *meaninglessness*? Why, if I have proved that everything has meaning and that there must be meaning when there is no nothingness? Because, unlike nothingness, and even unlike eternal death, only *meaninglessness is a possibility* which a human being has to confer upon his own existence and aesthetics. So not on his essence — although it strongly influences essence as well as the body! Rather, we can "fail to uncover" meaning, or fear that it shall be taken from us, since our freedom in spirit is precisely "freedom in meaning". It is therefore wrong to take *meaninglessness* — rather than *the smallest meaning* — as the opposite of *full or highest meaning*. That would be my definition: for if there is a God or Supra-Being, there is no absolute meaninglessness. But we fear the fall of meaning, for meaning is not "given". What is given is its base, and the co-

meaning and Supra-meaning exists, but, as Frankl says, we do not know it; we seek it, and we therefore fear. The very fact that we seek it means we are on the right path, and that we *fear* more than those who fall into hopelessness. We *both create and seek* meaning. So — meaning *both exists and is created*. That is the definition of freedom! And so I am in my thinking Hegelian — but only up to the last stop. Likewise with Kant. Meaning exists through others and through God, but also significantly, and perhaps decisively, in us. When they all ask what the meaning of life is, and answer this way and that, the answer is — *that there is infinitely much or little of it*. People are in fact the only beings who ontologically have a greater choice of depth of evil than the "devil" himself, for they can strike at pure good with minimal or no motivation and principle. They can — *betray* without cause, say. They will not do this — but they can. Whereas the angel cannot, for he is closed within his broad internal frame and external frame, or punishment. He cannot act outside his position and motivation. He can deepen only depth, while we can still have a vast choice within an even broader frame. But we have no such depth, and so we are unstable and afraid. When we are "fixed", and when our unstable reality is "fixed" into dynamic frequency, then we too shall operate — in depth at one of the levels of state.

It remains the question whether their meaning and knowledge (of the deceased, if we all attain full knowledge *on the other side* of death) — as something illuminated in all its darkness and all its height — will be what deepens the pull and depth of the abyss and of selfish self-sufficiency and shame, or rather a spur to be drawn up onto our true branch and essence when we are lifted again!! But that essence is through — *Observation and love — through the relation I–other–Supra-Being and the total Being which was, ought to have been, is, and shall be*. We either fear this, or fear remaining in the minority. But the one who loves spirit and the answer to the question "why" in life will find the "how" — as **Nietzsche** put it in *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), in the phrase Frankl made his motto: "*He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how.*" That this comes from the "Antichrist" only deepens the question of how much more we Christians

ought to look at things this way. We are often less believers than the unbelievers. I fear that I am weak; and for my grandfather and other members of the family I fear that they will be "too strong", and will want to go down with me as an idol and most important family member. To go into themselves and into the wrong divinity. My grandfather often looked upon me as a "god", and that is not good. He knew everything of philosophy and theology, but the question is whether, alongside all his virtues, *truth* will be what moves him to forgiveness and reconciliation with himself, my father, and others, or whether it will pull him into a hell of knowledge, egocentricity, and the truth he wishes (rather than the objective truth for which he stood his whole life). I do not approach him as someone wiser or less wise, neither from the heights nor from ruin — I approach him as a weak person who wishes that we forgive each other our ignorance and wrong will, and that, precisely upon the ontology of our highest value and effort, we should restore the purity of spirit, body, and soul. My humility as example I hope will help him and my grandmother, and the people I mention and for whom I plead through *Observation, writing, work, prayer, and — living*. I do not do this as a saviour, or for the sake of evening accounts and satisfaction alone — for these are always disproportionate — but as someone who does not look upon himself as *strong* because he is weak, while wounding the ego. So, against the famous Pauline phrase, I would say: *my weakness is not my strength — it is still WEAKNESS!* But it is *Observed, faced, and accepted* weakness — and the difference between unobserved and accepted weakness is the only thing that matters. I come forward as an equal among the dead and the fallen, with many good sides like my grandfather, but my decision and spiritual desire is directed perhaps irreversibly — *upwards*. A skyscraper grows heavier the higher it is, but the desire to fall grows smaller and the cushioning beneath it greater — even as the *possible* depth of a fall, segment by segment, becomes the deepest and longest! I must accept my grandfather's wish — to decide at the re-sit examination. Likewise I, too, shall fall and die, and must likewise decide — to accept life, grace, my reality, God, meaning, and so on. If grandfather says I have betrayed him and refuses — that is his decision. I cannot mourn

him, nor go down after him. I love life and Being as such, and my soul is, at the very least, "as valuable" as another's. But decisions are personal. If someone's decision is NO, then my freedom and love towards him and attachment are precisely to accept it and not to weep and run after him, for he had known and could have done everything to choose — good and life. If he has stood his whole life for truth, good towards students and people and himself or me, despite his faults, I am DEEPLY in the hope that he shall choose — YES; and that I shall choose the same; and so shall all of you who read this, for life is incalculably precious and beautiful, and the dust forgotten. When you once say YES, as when I had a bowel examination or a deep-tissue massage — then we shall no longer be unstable, because the doctor or the masseur will "press" us and complete the examination and the firm massage, without letting us go and without our being able to think too much and pull back. Then our freedom will be full but the instability within it — restrained and stifled, and only then begins the *purgatory* whose end we know, and where afterwards we mourn nothing. If something pulls me at the depth of reason and of spirit independently of "indoctrination", then metaphysics — or faith — is at the very least *operative*, whatever its ultimate ontology turns out to be. I am the last man one can easily, or even subconsciously and educationally, "persuade" as long as I am not under coercion. We do not repeat philosophers and theologians (or at least we ought not) — they repeat us and our aspirations, feelings, and thoughts from the beginning of history, regardless of the depth of subjectivity. It is proof that subjectivity and relativity do not disturb absoluteness — and on this, more in the last chapter. I fear only "failure" and burnout and the unknown. Otherwise I am convinced that I am on the right path. I know that we are either at the peak of existence and falling apart as a society because spirit does not exist but is "invented" and used for an illusion of longer life and survival, or else we have indeed fallen from "paradise". As my grandfather's professor **Tkalčić** — who was a rationalist and humanist in socialist times, and died not long after my grandfather's examination — said: AESTHETICS is necessarily connected with essence, ethics, and even existence! *Beauty–truth–good* as one. **G. E.**

Moore, whom I too have in my home archive, wished to simplify "philosophy" a little, yet also to distinguish naturalism from the category of good. Although he is not religious, he is right when he held — in *Principia Ethica* (1903) — that *good* is a *simple, unanalysable* property, the open-question argument being his demonstration that no naturalistic definition will exhaust it. He himself called it "non-natural" rather than "spiritual"; the spiritual reading is mine, not his. But evidently he did not find the space between logic, mind, brain chemistry, and the metaphysics he was fleeing, and so he said these are appearances in things and visions themselves. After all, every ontology necessarily imposes some ethics of behaviour or discipline (towards oneself or towards others, in every part), and this has long been the case. **Kant** says that "beauty is the symbol of morality". And although for **Hegel** art is a lower phase and only the appearance of the idea, every philosopher is in fact directed to some form of art in the presentation of the "mystery" of life or beauty. Only **Nietzsche** somewhat radically separates morality from the beauty of the "great work of art".

This is that form within Being in which our Observation captures the infinite beauty or ugliness of which I speak. That which can be felt but not explained. For tastes and ideas and philosophies are matters of personal stance and taste, but as Kant and others think — subjective taste is again directed towards some objective norm of beauty to which we aspire, and which is hard always to describe or even to agree upon. The great majority of us is oriented towards there, but we look differently. Furthermore, Kant holds that our eyes are *transcendental for our world*, while I claim that our world *does not exist*. Rather, it completes God's world, which we cannot understand and see in full. But we do not create God's world and spirit, as Hegel thinks. Rather, we are "joined" simply, and different truths are complementary and do not exclude each other, but create an absolute and synthetic cumulative truth. So, by Kant, we have, for example, *violet spectacles* through which the world appears violet to us, and in this way we operate with our *theoretical and practical reason*, especially through morality, by which we *see* others, but only *ourselves* we *build and form for eternity*. There I stop and even support myself with the new findings, not on

the philosophical level alone but also on the atomic and physical, which gives me even greater joy for the law of spirit. So the world exists in itself and is seen as God, others, animals, angels, and so on see it. But our violet spectacles are not only spectacles and a way of seeing — they *make* the subject and object we Observe — ALSO VIOLET. This does not exclude the total and other side of reality. So our spectacles and our Observation are not something static, passive, and directed at others as if an *instrument*, and at ourselves as a *means of education*. Rather, we *build* ourselves and complete ourselves, and change our fundamental essence for better, worse, or unchanged through life and lives (and of course existence, aesthetics, and everything else, in fact). And others through our gaze we also *change*, but we do not influence their final reality. This is confusing both in reality and in theory, but it is so. We give to others penicillin, by which they — like my grandmother before death — wake up. We sometimes even "poison" them. But they, in that final and spiritual penicillin, again make their decision. But then they have a strong consciousness of the totality of their times, and their choice will be ever more angelic — with almost full awareness and responsibility and love for life, or death, that is, dying in the "wrong" self. Just as they may choose that their wrong reality is — the right reality, so our violet spectacles are not "calibrated" to violet, and even if they are, they change, and that is the foundation of freedom from God or from Being. So all circumstances, habits, thoughts, genes, and so on direct us towards the fact that we do not even see the same colour, and our capacity for seeing is above the instrument itself. We have a mind closest to God's, and that is why we have never to the end seen all colours. Kant is right that the external world exists, but his cognition and Observation are exclusively through — instruments. Whereas I look at instruments as something that is the essence itself, or that the essence supersedes the instrument and the instrument also becomes a kind of essence! The frame of the spectacles is given, but *colour is not given*, and every colour is real and influences the appearance of what we Observe. With this, the stone cannot decide for itself that it is not a stone, but a human being can decide for himself that he

is not what others, or God himself, see in him. In short, *Kantian spectacles* are not only *transcendental* but — let me venture — *transcendent and constructivist*! They do not only see, but — *create reality*. I am aware that this last move is no longer Kant's: Kant himself would have held that the thing-in-itself remains untouched by our forms of intuition, and the German Idealists who followed him (Fichte, Hegel) are usually thought to have already gone too far when they collapsed that distinction. What I am proposing here is therefore not orthodox Kant; it is, more honestly, a *post-Kantian* move in which Observation is granted a small constitutive role over the objects of its attention — closer perhaps in spirit to the participatory readings of quantum measurement than to either Kant or Berkeley. We have never been closer to the truth that science fiction is not fiction, and that the human being is the only being that may go to other planets, and perhaps one day with as little equipment as possible. And that those planets *would not exist, or would not exist with any similarity* to how we now see them and in their order, were they not **Observed**! They would be a chaotic series of some atoms. But the illusion of the Matrix is not a system in which we are slaves — rather, the illusion and reality of the Matrix and of Zion are such that we are slaves and rulers — OF OURSELVES; and **the system or technology is exclusively our *slave*, not our *ruler***. The truth is the reverse both of what we see outside and of what we see in the film *The Matrix*! We rule over ourselves and over the Matrix and Zion and the Machine (*Deus ex machina*). The only thing we do not rule over is the Source! We *think* we are slaves because we deceive ourselves the whole time, or wish to be in deception, and are not aware that we have inverted the truths, but it is the truth which has not inverted itself! The anxiety which ruled over me is now in the background, and I rule over it more. How so? I confronted it directly, even with the distraction method.

A LITTLE MORE ON TIME DILATION AS PROOF FOR THE END AND “FICTIONS”

When we connect again with Kant — and how much I accept him, while not regarding everything as illusion (reality is rather a synthesis of illusions) — we must again mention Newton and the basic laws. Both perhaps share the idea that everything outside aspires to a being-for-itself and to staticity at its core, while motion is contingent or relational. While I write this, by the law of relativity, my wife, who went by car to a repair, has saved a nearly invisible part of a millisecond of time, and less has passed for her. This does not exclude the truth that for me that millimillisecond passed more, nor has she skipped reality and somehow seen that cells are dividing more slowly in others. Yet such a paradox in time is in fact — dilation. And it tells us that the time of one and the time of another is not the same, although it is also one.

Yesterday I looked at the mill after dinner. At first I did not see it because I was turned “now” toward the dog and the ball (so in a Hegelian sense, that was my “now”). Then I saw peripherally and unconsciously, then peripherally and consciously, and finally consciously and directly, with some will. These are lay expressions; I wish only to describe a gradual process. The mill as fact; my observation as fact; observation and creation by another so that I may see it at all — as a fact for itself; observation by others in various times and consciousnesses as fact; voluntary and physical activity toward that mill until the end of its existence: the entropic laws per se, the plan and the work to restore it, destroy it, love it, not love it, paint it, not paint it, use it, see it as beautiful, ugly, fitting, or as something that disturbs.

Aristotle’s law of rest, then Newton’s double law, and Kant’s law (and Heidegger’s in part) as the beginning of judgement, Kant’s “regulative ideas” as the inception of constructive observation; Heisenberg and the idea that “measurement changes the system” — indeterminacy where there is no interaction, the “quantum eraser” as an example: if we destroy information, it returns to a “wave state” before anyone has seen it. Lanza

links this with consciousness. I link it with individual, cumulative, collective, and God's consciousness. Hegel and the "bud, blossom, fruit" — the mill is not only wood, not an empty place, not only beautiful or only ugly: it is the truth, a shared life, a quantum and dynamic act.

The Zeno effect — concentration on the mill with a goal. The sum of relations (high frames per second, where the last frame is not empty information but the meaning of all previous frames — the film effect, a higher "charging" of attention). To this we add mental or physical motion of body and speech and influence. The yearning of spirit for life, of spirit and matter; the resistance to the centripetal nature of matter and of the fallen spirit. The anti-Heideggerian experience in me: spirit as a variable that influences our health, ageing, and matter — a proof that it is independent of matter, and not its "product". One piece of meaningful information is stronger than hundreds of meaningless pieces, and gathers them together.

Einstein, whose proof goes both for and against, but is crucial. The laws of thermodynamics against cyclicity (as Nietzsche and certain mathematicians believe), and the impossibility of energy loss. The finitude of the infinity of possibilities in the universe — which would necessarily return everything to the beginning — fails to consider other universes, a supra-universe, or a parallel universe. The collapse of the wave function and superposition as proofs that two possibilities, or being in two places, in fact collapse the wave only at observation. Aquinas' logic of the first mover answers the thesis that things-for-themselves also create order in dead mutual interaction. The capacity of the human being as the only being who can observe even himself and another as an "object" (Hume), and in general can create and predict.

When all this is summed, a kind of synthesis of the answer in the algorithm would be: yes, the mill has been objectively slowed by my gaze. The fact that the objective is necessarily tied to the subjective does not negate the subjective — it shocks the objective. Death as an ontological state set in at once "at the beginning". Matter departs first as the weakest, the soul forms itself last. Body is mortal; spirit and soul are not. That is what

has perplexed people from time immemorial. We propagate ourselves in such a way that we spread life and death at the same time. But in this perhaps lies the secret of the relativity of fictions.

The fiction of time is doubly fearsome. For my grandmother, time passed unbelievably quickly while she dreamt and reminisced about the past, or solved a crossword and watched a show or the lights outside playing on the wall. But it passed unbelievably slowly when she thought about nothing, about death and transience. The dilation of time manifests itself in the fact that the one who moves faster has the fiction that the slower ones move faster than he does — he sees an accelerated film. But they in fact live more slowly, and to them these faster ones seem to go equally and slowly. The slower people in fact age and die more quickly and divide cells more quickly, but do not reach as far in real time. So we have two paradoxes — the physical and the subjective — united in one truth: time is relative, but it also exists.

As the late older Professor Ante Fiamengo, my grandfather's friend, said in this dedicated book on Saint-Simon and Comte: Socrates claimed that philosophers are not only observers but creators. While he meant society, I mean reality as such. The wish for suicide is therefore wrong, precisely because the human being co-creates reality, and reality is co-created by the human being. The whole of that anxiety is either a lie or a second phase of the dark night of the soul, as St John of the Cross writes. Our pain is not from darkness but from too strong a light; only at the end, as if we pass through the earthly globe, do we arrive at mystical union, the overflowing of love, the constant presence of Being and God in stability and perfect freedom.

THE EQUATION AND THE “SLOWNESS OF THE DYING PROCESS”

If time dilates, and observation co-creates reality, then the equation of the dying process must also be relative. My grandmother’s dying was slow not only because her body was failing slowly, but because her time slowed down with her consciousness. The clock on the wall ticked at the same rate, but her experience of those last weeks was a kind of stretched present — in which past memories had more weight than the current moment.

I propose, then, an equation of the slowness of the dying process: the more consciousness is concentrated on the present, the slower time passes; the more consciousness drifts to past or imagined futures, the faster it passes. For the dying, both happen at once. The present, in its final form, becomes everything; and yet the past also rises to flood the present. The combination is what I call the slowness — not a slowness of clock-time, but a slowness of being.

This is not a poetic fancy. It corresponds to what I observed at the bedsides of my grandmother and grandfather, and to the experiences described by others (including patients in palliative care). The dying often report that one day feels like a year, or a year like one day. The variable that determines which it is, in my hypothesis, is the degree of acceptance: where there is acceptance, time slows and acquires depth; where there is fear, time accelerates and becomes shallow.

If this is so, then the work of accompanying the dying — by family, by chaplains, by doctors, by friends — is in part the work of helping them to slow time by accepting the present. Not by denial of death, but by deep acceptance of life in its remaining form. Frankl, Buber, and others have hinted at this. My equation is only an attempt to put it more precisely. Where slowness is achieved, the dying process is not a horror but a long, conscious goodbye — a transition rather than a fall.

A LOGICAL GAME WITH PARMENIDES

Parmenides struggles with reason and the senses while I attempt to reconcile them. He is right that our mortality is an illusion, but the claim that our body is made of the opposites of light and night is again a slide into Eastern philosophies. Our body is not an opposition. Body, spirit, and soul are apparently separated, yet share the same degree of corruption. Why we have a body I do not know, but that very separateness of consciousness is an indication that the Logos has an “intention” in our being self-standing. He holds that we “think” even when we do not think — a good answer to my doubts about what happens when we are damaged, asleep, ill, or mad. But here he excludes the question of “thirds” and the encounter between persons, and offers no answer to why Being should divide itself at all and then return into itself. He also excludes the possibility that there is a qualitative difference in how we think and perceive. If my grandmother believed the floor was better than the bed, that belief is equal to mine, who think the opposite. There must therefore be a third thinker who would confirm or build upon one of the truths.

His meditation on a certain “inauthenticity” in life and death is the pure opposite of Heidegger’s “authenticity”, and both repel me. The further question is this: if the number of human beings in Being is finite, and my brother is never born though it was possible for him to exist — does he belong to nothingness and serve as its proof? Parmenides would slip out and say that what is outside Being is neither nothingness nor Being. But he does not say that nothing exists; he says that nothing does not exist. There I catch him: my brother exists, because my brother is precisely that nothing. Granted, I imagined him; but what I have never imagined (for example a thirtieth sister whom I have not brought to mind) does not exist at all. Whilst Parmenides goes into absolute nothingness in such a case, sealing himself into a logic that my modest grasp could hardly equal, I must flee from him whilst holding him by the hand. Being therefore exists, and everything exists, and reality is the sum of images; but motion is not an illusion, nor is the “fear” arising from the mortal senses. Both exist.

How is it that both exist? I enter the region of infinite potential. I do not need logical or philosophical expertise to “know” and “feel” that my brother could have existed, even though he does not exist and is not necessary in this version of the universe. Only thus do I close my monistic circle — that eternity, the present, and infinity exist, but that nothingness does not exist. There is always “something”. I have thereby “saved” my unborn brother as well, and I greet him on this occasion, introducing — albeit as a philosophical invalid in my mad “resistance” — a voluntaristic necessity into cold logic. For the inverted pyramid that runs through all my views applies also to the question of hell: is it worse for the one nearest the exit into true Being, and so the most restless (the first circle of hell), or for the one more secure in ontological coldness and darkness, but in the last circle? That is why suicide is a logically impossible and absurd return from essence into potential.

A dog will never compare its existence and essence with that of a bird, nor be curious about why it has no wings. Parmenides asserts that to be is the same as to think. Here I leapt, as a prematurely born thinker, onto Descartes, to drive out the question of “thinking” as a condition of any existence. Yet Parmenides is right even here: if I see that Berkeley holds the same stance as I do, this is in fact very close to my idealism: *esse est percipi* — to be is to be perceived. The Logos therefore both thinks and “looks”; otherwise we would not exist. But the problem is that the emphasis was placed on our thinking — on us as beings and as *Dasein*, or as being-in-time — whilst the consideration that “someone other” thinks of us was not taken into account. Heidegger turned away from concentration on ourselves toward Being itself, but on the other side closed himself in. Kant and Hegel fled too violently into idealism; Nietzsche, the existentialists, and the nihilists all sought a way to flounder in the chaotic “washing-machine”. I, who have taken them all into account and said that truth is above them and above me, do not close the circle but open it, even as I close the direction.

Suicide is logically wrong first of all — for Dostoyevsky, through the figure of Kirillov in *Demons*, shows how a man was obsessed with the idea that he must kill himself in order to prove he was free from God and from

the State. God and the State, even if they are not ideal, are not our enemies. The paradox of evasion and of everything else is a living quicksand.

MY ONE LOGICAL PARADOX IN ETHICS, AND A DETOUR TO LOCKE

*My present wife Irma is in truth fourteen years older than I am, and she looks at the photograph of me when I was small and finds me “sweet”. If she could return into the past and meet me when she was eighteen and I was four, she could not regard me merely as a “child” — and she would be a paedophile, which she is not.*⁷⁵

This is my proof of the absurdity of pure logic if one does not take into account causality, the passage of time, the question of identity and intention in both cases, and the impossibility of going into the past — together with the necessity of a detour to Locke and Heraclitus. And where in all this is the story of how I do not feel a difference in years, of how much

⁷⁵A similar paradox: if I were to return to a pre-war state and, in place of future leaders or criminals, carry out the revolution they would later carry out, they themselves — at that earlier moment, when in their own youth they rarely plan war and revolution — would regard me as not normal, since I would be seeing forward what they have not yet conceived. Morality would then be inverted, and I would be despised by them as we later despise them. There is a further paradox that everyone, with ageing, becomes more anxious even when they do not admit it; and that even an “excess” of meaning, as with the “Muselmänner” in the camp (Levi), can wear out the frontal lobe of the brain if not in balance. Maximilian Kolbe is here an exception, though realistically he committed his own death even if from spiritual conviction. I once saw such a young woman in a waiting room, who said she functioned well on her tablets and was happy at work and in her family — and she truly was — yet I could see in her eyes a certain dependence on the tablets, or a slight instability, even though she was very positive. Sometimes you see what the other does not, though they have a right to their own truth (the example of the drunkard, my grandmother’s sister’s husband, who is convinced he is happy and carefree unlike us, and has only one problem, while we moralise). A further example: the Church demands the sacrament of marriage, yet because of my various parishes and their omissions and inertia I had to submit more paperwork than at any state administrative office — and they were even offended by it. Bureaucracy.

I have gained from learning of certain rights precisely from her, of a love even greater than from younger partners? How then am I to defend Parmenides whilst at the same time having to fight against him? The book would run to hundreds of pages. My recommendation for these problems is the film *Birth* by Jonathan Glazer.

Whilst most people will see chaos in methodology and disciplines, and will hold that the problem of philosophy lies precisely in every imprecise word or citation, my logic in critical thinking is not “arrogant cleverness” but a bell that rings in my head for reasons unknown even to me. If I see that Hegel attacked Kant as “too abstract” and reproached him for the absolute value of the categorical imperative (with which I formally agree to a degree), how am I not to notice, while reading the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that Hegel himself is the one who is abstract in his conception of Spirit and Absolute Spirit? And how am I not to be struck by the impression that Hegel, with respect but also with his own envy, wished to elevate his truth as the higher? This does not mean intuition is more important — but for me it is essential for socio-humanistic thought, because philosophy is for the human being and not the reverse.

My life is so amateurishly directed that my only profession — law — has in fact become the most amateurish thing about me; the only things I have retained from it are credibility, intuition, and basic principles. Formal education is therefore very important. But would I be lying to myself if I said that I have learned more about life in life itself than in books? A first-rate amateur can never beat a poor professional at tennis, that is true. But he may be more persistent, more successful, more constant, and more consistent — even in passion and in love — than one who has not developed his “potential” and has fallen by the wayside. Neither is an “ideal type”, but life is the shared subject of us all. Until life is known — and we have only just begun to know it — we have in fact no right either to read or write about it. A well-known politician-philosopher once said to my grandfather: “You Marušićs are not made for philosophy, it is too difficult.” My grandfather kept silent. Two years later, that same “student” came to him for an exam, as to an assistant. But my grandfather redirected him to the professor.

ON MY “HUBRIS” AS PROUD “AUDACITY” INSTEAD OF THE ORDINARY SHEPHERDING OF BEING

What follows enters the dissecting of philosophy, which is neither my aim nor my ability — but the problem has already arisen. I appeal to Plato and Parmenides just as Heidegger does, yet for other reasons. In his collection *Introduction to Metaphysics*, which I have from my grandfather in the 1959/61 edition, one can see clearly what he admires in them, what he criticises, and where I myself differ.

He holds that they correctly distinguished *physis* and *logos* in such a way that this final “gathering” or thinking is the resistance to “technological” and technocratic dullness, to “idle talk” and to the failure to experience essence. We see at once that *logos* is a concept I use for “meaning”, “God”, or “Supra-Being”, whereas here it is Being itself gathered from what opens and emerges. This emergence is clearly something other than the stepping out of nothingness which I emphasise — but I emphasise it precisely because of the problem of being-toward-death, with which I do not make peace. And I must say something of his elitist tool of linguistic labyrinths, by which his more precise analysis and intuition produced — from his very awakening — a closed instrument and a circle of people who understand him and are interested in him at all. After all, I too must use certain constructions for life-questions, in order to approach social abstractions from behind the constructs of science. Yet is science not a common good for the “ordinary people”, who are interested in it and who begin as a *tabula rasa* to study and learn?

The above is, for him, a “veil”, a contrast, the possibility for anything at all to be shown to us — this much is clear to me. But it is not essential for my thesis; I mention it so as not to seem entirely ignorant. Being without thinking is also not formed, he writes. It is empty, or something similar. However, while I, despite errors and disagreement, would not be a “forgetter of Being” in Heidegger’s sense, I would still be too audacious in his eyes, because I hold that I am a co-creator of Being, not that Being first discloses itself to us. He would in fact wonderfully see in me precisely that

Nietzschean will to power. He would say that I, too, complete and climax that metaphysics, and that I have in truth become — a nihilist. For nihilism for him is not the absence of values but the excess of them, in which the value and the contemplation of Being are lost. That is what I like in minds who view things from an inverted pyramid, even when we disagree.

When I answer him that I am a positive nihilist, and agree that Nietzsche is in fact actively so, but observe that he himself (Heidegger) is a passive nihilist — that is a wonderful exchange of pieces in a chess game with a grandmaster, where I cannot win. But I have “bought” time and attention, and my aim is to reach mate or a draw despite hundreds of “blunders”. It is no longer a secret that I have fallen a little into the trap I noticed, but I think my truth is relevant, and I will not abandon the thesis. After all, my truth is again the reality of the conditions in which I found myself and was raised, and he would even understand this.

Yet in ontology it is remarkable how he appeals to Parmenides as a good example — someone who was a radical monist, even more radical than I. Furthermore, he speaks of Plato as a fine conclusion to the old Greek era. But Plato is also closer to me than to him, for Heidegger sees as “evil” the fact that instead of “unconcealment” and the drawing of Being out of darkness and the momentary, the gaze was turned to fixed Ideas and higher goals and sources, such as God. Yet it is precisely here that I return, and that in my “modern thinking”. I know that Being first discloses itself, but even this is questionable if I hold that our co-creation with God is in fact independent of time and depends on hierarchy and knowledge/power alone. Even our eternal deciding to the last moment may be an appearance in which faith itself flounders. Here I am similar to Parmenides, but not as a static sum and a problem of the illusion of mind and senses; rather, I hold that our decision is already formed long ago. In that subtle margin between freedom and determinism we play out the film and the life to the end, while the film has already happened, in the sense that what we live through now is only the reproduction of consequences and of a future that will unfold and has in some manner already unfolded.

Heidegger holds, therefore, that our contemplation must be active and not passive, but not “creative”. I agree with him, yet I introduce and choose

the creative component. I bring back Greek and Christian ideas as overarching and transcendent, and I view time subjectively, but differently from him: for the alleged being-toward-death I regard neither as one's own thing nor as death, but only as the "dying" of spirit and the halting of body and a transition into a new state and present. I have already rejected the horizon and accepted the instrument or the field of view. And on top of this I introduce the strange idea of an epistemological ontology. The general Being I do not regard, as he does, as a "thing" that is an "event" and not eternal. However much he avoids defining and taking God into his philosophy as the highest being or creator, because this would disturb his vision and the limitedness of his inquiry, he too cannot wholly escape that variable. He skips it just as audaciously as I skip him, while in the end crying out for the "need for a last God to save us".

I agree, too, that the human being is a question and not an answer; that the basic question is why something rather than nothing; and that questioning is historical and not a finished backdrop. But Plato's coming-into-being out of nothing is something I must — yet do not wish to — demarcate myself from, because these are subtle differences among us all. If I am a Homo creator and a participatory co-creator (biblically even a "god" with a small g, or a child of God), then the entire universe is also participatory — think of John Wheeler. I am audacious, but I am not arrogant; I believe I am not unrealistic but that I save, in the right way, both Being and Dasein and beings from forgetting, and confirm being-toward-eternity. The only question is what kind of eternity. The constitution of reality here is similar yet different from that vessel of Plato's and Heidegger's in which "something becomes within something", rather than only in empty physical space. The "by what" of becoming is where the three of us diverge or converge.

Hermeneutically, on the linguistic problem: Heidegger himself is concrete yet confused. He holds that gathering is precisely through "language", and he insists on precision and the disclosedness of truth, while on the other side he deliberately leaves room for "secrecy" and mystery. That is why he restricts language from over-perfect technological and scientific terminology. He deliberately chooses confusion at times, and the

term “metaphysics” he uses in his own way. We have arrived at the extreme subtle problems which I said at the outset I wish to avoid, because they are not essential for the direction in which I must “pass by them quickly”. My pages are running out, my time is running out despite my greater speed than ever. But it is not my horizon that runs out — it is my instrument, the instrument that was given to me. When? It was given to me at once, and at once I shall lose it when its time comes. Creativity and thinking, but also physical work, must move on to other fields; yet this stance will continue to live to the end, beyond writing (until my instrument expires).

WHY I WRITE IN THIS WAY — ON SCIENCE TODAY AS THE FORGETTING OF BEING, AND ON THE SHOCK OF THE DEATHS OF PROFESSORS BATOVANJA, PETRAK, KREGAR, AND OTHERS

You, the reader, will think — nothing, what is this, why is this, what for, it is good, it is bad, it could have been, it disturbs me, it is dull, it is mad. You will think it in the snap of a second. Energy and imprint are read at once and from above. Time is less and more than we think. Even that restlessness of spirit which draws one in a work repels, even when it concerns philosophy, art, the essay. In that repulsion I see today’s problem. Order is important; form is important. This cannot pass for something “tidy”, because Kantian different “tastes” are nonetheless oriented toward the objective higher good. Synthesis is also oriented — toward a higher conclusion. We do not see it, but we feel it. That is why 99 people feel that chaos and total freedom in writing would be something aesthetically, and even essentially, “bad”. What is bad in this respect is bad also for existence and reduces the chances of survival of our beings. Here I can say, like my grandfather following Mannheim, that 99 people against one does not mean their truth is correct, or that truth is measured by majority. But on

the other hand, my aim is not to overcome those 99 but to supplement them.

Anomalies, good and bad and the mixed kind, spoil a regularity that is in fact firm — the educational system long functions and advances. But I, as a small worm, can pass and do pass through the one hole in the cheese through which the cheese draws breath — the lack of fulfilment. Everything is filled; almost nothing is fulfilled. Let me not even speak of culture and art. How am I, as a lawyer, to say that I love art more? And that philosophers like Nietzsche and Heidegger also loved art, only for other reasons — admiration, the moment, anxiety, tragedy, the allowing of disclosure? It is easy for me, perhaps from the margin, to say I do not care for my own profession. To those who wish to be quasi-lawyers: take my hard-earned diploma, you do law, I shall do philosophy and art. But truly, believe me that I was on a kind of excursion at the university, or at school, or wherever. The human being is a being that acts and thinks. I am not a being that is a lawyer because I obtained a master's in law and got a 5 on the diploma defending myself against Kant's retribution. I am not an artist because I play guitar, nor a seducer because I married twice. Even for my first wife I said — take her, she is not my possession, and I bless her new marriage. I have no monopoly on the law, on marriage as God's gift and largely free decision. I have no power over the house and my body and my songs or books and medals and diagnoses. Those are only — things.

Today, in fact, too little is asked of science, not too much. What is asked is an orderly text with minimal intervention, or even great freedom of thought within a small thesis or compilation. But no — let us set aside tidiness sometimes; let us introduce great interventions and great changes in thinking, and let that be our polemos (in which philosophical journal of the same name I, as a lawyer, intentionally or unintentionally strayed and published a paper, together with my correspondence with the editor which is in itself probably unique in the madness and real anxiety of waiting for an answer or refusal). Even if my effort is entirely overlooked, it remains a seal and a contemplation of Being and of beings by one being and Dasein, or one being in time. Let us not introduce revolutions in politics and the audacity of overcoming greater minds, but let us be audacious in a “third

way” and in freedom of thought and equal discussion with all — at the market or in the highest philosophy or in the hospital with the doctors. But let that struggle be constructive if it can be. Let us introduce a revolution in our understanding of reality and the meaning of life, not by weapons. Why? Because I was not the 501st suicide, but I could have been. Why I was not, I do not fully know even myself. Perhaps I did not meet all the conditions for the quota? But I believe also that on this side we can reduce the number to, say, 400, if not to 0. And that through perception we may understand that no one in fact killed himself, that they only awaited the rescue of their lives and dignity. We have the chance to be those who help and those who are helped, not only those who are helped. And to accept both reciprocal roles.

When I heard that my dear professors Petrak and Batovanja had died — the first authorities who ever gave me a good grade after I almost failed in secondary school — I was in disbelief, as I was for my late brother-in-law David and for some suddenly departed neighbours. With many of them I had spoken in their last days, or had seen them in perfect health. Batovanja wrote in her last days on Facebook precisely about her notebook and Heidegger. I cannot believe it was only an impression, a symbol, a flash, and that they are no more. What I cannot believe — is not. I wept as if for myself, but not from despair, from love. I remember them photographically. I remember the hour of Professor Batovanja — whom others also “saw” differently in secondary school — better than I remember yesterday. Her small frame, her lapses, her laughter. I asked her, nervous in the fourth year: “What is so funny to you each time, I do not understand?” She laughed and answered: “That I see philosophy will end up badly this year. I laugh from despair at how we have not managed anything, and at how little you know.” Many blamed her, for she was slow and had become strict. But she was lonely, and she was right. She was right also when she said — “You have disappointed me, Marušić.” Let us pause here. She did not use the formal “you”, but addressed me by surname. She addressed me by my grandfather’s surname because she greatly valued him. Many professors asked if I was his grandson. They had a certain respect, but at that age it did not interest me much. Now I would give everything to be able to have coffee with her. She said in last grade that even I „disappointed her“.

I do not make peace with memory only as having-been. Her death was not in anxiety and slowness; it was sudden. But in fact her death is even “smaller” for that. That ontological and phenomenological shock of sudden departure, and the awareness that my own instrument too is not infinite (perhaps fortunately), create a chill but also confirm that our knowledge and intuitions are correct. I have not been in pathology to know that people die. I had not even seen people and animals die until my grandmother, grandfather, dog, cat, and others died in my arms while I wept in love and in the wish that my health not be merely my own. I have the intuition that death exists but also that it is not death — that this trick is not a horror, that we are not transient things, but that it is a transition. I am audacious enough to be convinced that Dr Vesna and the others I mention know what I am doing and what I am thinking and can hear me. Although I am not the most important person in their life, I am an important part of their life in every time, and they of mine. They are proud of me, because of my wish and my truth. Not because I studied as they did and as long as they did, but because they too were interested in truth and a better reality. I remember Professor Batovanja going alone for coffee, feeding cats. She had a certain uncorruption, a certain peace, and also a certain sorrow at being alone in the world. I, who am not a Heideggerian or at least not in most things, claim that she too lived in a false perception. Professor Batovanja, you are not alone, and this means that you never were alone, only “distinctive” and passionate. You are an unrepeatable and key figure.

JASPERS IN MY DEFENCE AND “ANNELIESE VOLKMANN-SCHLUCK” IN MY GRANDFATHER’S

A SUMMARY AND THE QUESTION OF MY PHILOSOPHY

Walter Kaufmann, who summarised “Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre” and added some original texts — in the old Meridian edition from my grandfather’s home library, from the early 1960s — regards Nietzsche as someone who was not an existentialist but without whom existentialism would be unthinkable, even in Heidegger, who continued a form of existentialism. But here many names disassociate themselves from the term existentialism, especially when they wish to be placed in a “school”. I too am surely some kind of existentialist in the end. But here Jaspers’ understanding of the approach to existentialism, philosophy, science, and schools is especially important.

Before that, we may notice again those subtle differences probably known to all students, but only now interesting to me: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche had the same passion and “revolt”, though in different directions. Both are critics of nineteenth-century rationalism, but one “saves” Christianity by abandoning the border and wall where reason begins (in contrast to Aquinas), while the other still embraces reason in order to place the human being at the centre and “destroy” Christianity in his final idea. He even admires Aquinas’ intellect at times, but holds that he chose the wrong direction. Then come the differences in objective subjectivity of truth and the seeking of truth, or the question of perspectives. With Nietzsche, for example, I dislike the idea of death and the cyclicity without change (apart from the truly eternal question: “Would we live again a life without changes?”).

But I do not like his death as a conscious act — whereas I like a conscious life until death — nor his death as an act of doubtful meaning. I like, on the other hand, his struggle against the “squinting death” into which he himself fell in a way, while euthanasia for me is a bad counterpart to a good spirit.

Qualitatively, however, it may be no worse, and even equal (perhaps better) than passive and squinting suicide such as my grandmother carried out. There remains the question: what if we have no heirs, what if we have no other alternative to that meaning, what if procreation and repetition are the only meaning and we died precisely in that squinting and constantly relive anxiety? Here I am missing a dot on the i. I like his critique of hypocrisy and weakness more than death itself. But I do not like the abolition of the meaning of death, of the Supra-Being (as I call it) in God, the Logos, or the Supra-Meaning. Through the book there even runs a suspicion of scientists. But not in the sense of a battle of philosophy and art or experience against science (and against its dependence on observers and politics); rather, the problem of snobbish or formalist “paraphrasing” in science, which has so accumulated that one no longer knows what has been newly discovered. After all, philosophy too is called a science, but my grandfather long ago told me (with a slightly greater pedigree than mine, though he considered himself a sociologist despite having completed both studies): philosophy is philosophy. This does not mean it is higher or lower than science, or that one excludes the other. But today everyone is a philosopher, philosophers are scientists, scientists are technicians, and so on. This is not an absolute insight or justification, but we all know there is a trend. Once there were doctrines; today there are schemes, I would say. And there is no “stance” (no matter how well-supported).

Here Karl Jaspers comes happily to my aid. He writes a chapter “against the system” — here not (only) the system tied to the topic and to Foucault, but the system which exists even in science as a “detour around real reality”. Being and beings are understood only through endless interpretations and the repetition of history. After all, they all earlier criticised Hegel as an “armchair” ideologue. Precisely with Hegel my idea too has somewhat stalled. Kierkegaard hits perfectly the painful point of his and my forms of synthesis: a person’s choice is often exclusive and momentary — either/or, as with Isaac and Abraham. Not to mention myself in fear and not-knowing, as he claims, and certainly in (mis)trust or (un)enlightenment. Ultimately it may be a will to power and knowledge where we cannot have it. Yet one must take into account that rejecting

reason or experience denies the possibility that I might today make a different or more confirmatory decision in matters like an attempted or planned suicide, fear, study, marriage, mistakes, humane acts, work, and so on.

The whole of psychology (not only professional), philosophy, and the other social or natural sciences are “enchanted with their own discoveries and cleverness”, Jaspers says. They investigate nature and history, or “types of schizophrenia”, but do not understand themselves or Being. Bingo. Jaspers has said it all. If I say that I am someone who is not always too polite, but was horrified at the swearing and ideologies in the Croatian National Theatre once, or at the knowledge and education of certain theatre workers — is that not worrying? Universities and their history, especially law — theology — philosophy, have a tradition of dominance in this respect, though everything could be objected to. But the world around did not impress me much before or after the faculty, which was the favourite period of my education. For Jaspers, our shipwrecks and failures are precisely the essence of Being and of authenticity and learning, and not being a number in the “herd”. Human existence does not fit into “logical boxes”. Personal existence, he also believes, is the source of philosophy, not only lectures. My grandfather was known for modesty, and after his doctorate he in fact stopped engaging with philosophy and turned to sociology. But it is a fact that as an assistant he attracted a greater audience than a full professor, and provoked the problem of envy and the delay of his doctorate — which is why he went to England, and not because he wished to travel on his mother’s last 200 marks. On the other side, he kept his dissertation in a drawer in order to defend his doctorate together with his friend Babić, and this is also fact and not boasting.

Now to return to women. I have already mentioned my grandfather’s cooperation, friendship, and home visits at the sharp and sometimes “awkward” but very wise Volkmann-Schluck’s. He told me this many times, and in detail just a few years before his death. His wife Anneliese had her doctorate with Jaspers, just like the perceptive and now perhaps more popular than ever Hannah Arendt. What is interesting is that none of them shared the same thinking, as it might appear at first. What Schluck and

Jaspers and Heidegger, and even Mannheim, shared in matters of truth was the opposite of my grandfather's pursuit and stance. I do not know the details, but from the whole story it seems to me that my grandfather was, after all, a Platonist and a seeker of objective and higher truth in all phenomena. He greatly "got excited" when any relativities, relations, perspectives, conditions, or features and interests were introduced. I wonder how, and on what questions, the late and esteemed Anneliese supported precisely my grandfather. She did not write as much as she was present in everything and as much as she ultimately helped her husband in private life and work — which was not easy — and she was a bridge between Croatia and Germany of that time. She came to my grandfather and grandmother for summer holidays, and my grandfather said that she was very intelligent. Jaspers dealt with truth of living, of reason, and of existence, but none of them was a Platonist or a Christian and specifically Catholic philosopher and "theologian". My grandfather was a Catholic, even though he had great sympathies for some reformations.

Whilst the whole of philosophy often rested here on certain battles between so-called misogyny and misandry, and also a burden of female philosophers, I can in this context be only the greatest and truest feminist, while otherwise I have nothing to do with ideas of that type. Someone will say that Mrs Anneliese stood on my grandfather's side because of grades, of personal sympathy. That may be partly true. But — one had to have the courage, the knowledge, and the breadth to oppose one's husband and the philosophers and the full professors of such calibre, and to stand on the side of what was not on their wavelength, on the side of a lesser professor from Croatia, that is, from Yugoslavia at the time. Here I see the resemblance between Anneliese and Gertrude Jaspers. That quiet dissidence (as also with Hannah in relation to Martin) is something phenomenal, that breadth toward all possibilities and the not-closing of the door to other possibilities. It was she who introduced Jaspers to the reading of Plato and Plotinus and to the connection of authenticity with eternal truth. There was that firmness and freedom which Jaspers in fact loved. It is certainly important here to mention the parting between Jaspers and the Jaspersians and Heidegger and the Heideggerians — not only personally or

politically and ethically, but also because Jaspers saw Heidegger's philosophy as "too hard" and closed, instead of seeing it as constant communication. Russell, on the other side, would extinguish us all.

To close the existentialist story, which is nonetheless very important for the main and secondary themes of this work: existentialism has been understood in various ways (as has idealism) — as a revolt against the old philosophy, as atheism, nihilism, an unclear direction, a focus on certain new values and decisions. But all who engage with existential questions are in fact "existentialists", and today this direction is perhaps the most active. We differ in approach and conclusion, even if not perhaps in the aim of happiness in some temporality. J. Rousseau, for instance, was an advocate of transferring corruption and the problem onto the collective and not onto the individual, who is basically "good". This all immediately pulls to the other side and goes in a circle, or into symbiosis. Symbiosis is always permeated by weighing: "what did I say, what was I allowed to say, who will listen to me?" Utilitarianism, interest, Machiavellianism, inspiration, enlightenment, self-help, consolation, resistance — all these are incentives that make up the work of an existentialist. Sartre saw very well what may be hidden in today's psychological illnesses, or in former and current political conflicts or hatred: "bad faith", where it is always easier to have a wall, to be dependent or independent, part of a group or apart, and to pay the price of one and the other life, and to grieve for what we are not. It is even easier to pretend to be a wall, that is, to mirror benefit also from being a victim and to turn that into one's "power", I would add. But a person sometimes plans none of this and is simply a human being: weak, ignorant, in development, with drives, genes, inherited upbringing (in part). For Kierkegaard, will and faith are central (regardless of whether the goal is power), and knowledge is not a virtue or key to committing sin, as Socrates thinks on the other side. The worst of all may be to be, like Heidegger, included and yet rejected in two times — not a winner in both times like many who have "luck" or practical intelligence. True freedom of mind and action therefore exists as much as it does not exist.

ETHICS AND AESTHETICS

I did not wish to speak of ethics, because it is as secondary as it is key in what is and what becomes or exists. People's reproach to Heidegger that he did not address ethical questions of war has its reasons, if one takes into account that ethical questions are the cause and not the consequence of every bad ending. I noticed in my father, grandfather, and grandmother that their dying began precisely — ethically. Not only through shouts or evil words and wills, but when they began to break certain principles they had instilled in me. How aware of this they were, I do not know. But when they insisted that we throw a plastic bottle or cup out of the car window (which for me as an ecocide is one of the worse crimes), they were in fact already beginning to change and to enter into themselves, and to step out of the rules of what makes a human being human. Microscopically, one would only be able to observe whether it was first a falling of the body and the neurons, or whether it was before the physical disintegration, but it was months earlier. As for observation — even in art or literature, observation is sometimes key and creative and not only perceptive. But the subject or object created by the subject sets the direction and construction. To this are added evaluation, description, or critique of the work, as Umberto Eco would semiotically argue, of whom my grandfather spoke to me as a child. A tree is only a biological organism (if even that), until we know it and give it secondary or qualitative and accidental features, and all other evaluative ones. All concepts in discussions are likewise descriptive and logical.

Let me briefly connect two themes. To repeat about Nietzsche — instead of his rough view that aesthetics conditions morality (killing a butterfly or an insect, for example, although he did not take fear sufficiently into account), I rather hold that morality conditions even aesthetics. Are ethics the same as aesthetics, or is aesthetics, by the modern principle, "amoral"? That beautiful aesthetics (as in the phenomenon of music) is something that makes life more beautiful, we need not only cite the great philosophers or dissidents. Take just the philosophy graduate and successful musician, and once my idol, Goran Bregović, who said that life can exist without music and beauty but that this is like a juice that makes it sweeter. Although I struggle with Kant's thesis that form may be more important than content, essence

and what is do present and aestheticise themselves in some way. And this is even a biblical visual image. Feelings and the Kantian “eye of the beholder” are among the elements and perhaps the most contested, but there is a general agreement that the picture of my “dead” grandmother is repulsive to all of us who saw it. To some it is a cold fact, to others bitter, but to no one beautiful, nor good.⁷⁶

⁷⁶The following observations arose from a late-evening conversation — I will admit, conducted in a state of mild inebriation — during which I found myself watching my wife and the people around us with unusual attentiveness, and later submitted these observations to a philosophical discussion. Some examples from my discussions: (a) My wife was dressed in brown, white, and black tones — a boho-cube or parfait harmony that I found impossible to fault; her choice of these colours was itself shaped by multiple overlapping factors: the light of the space, the occasion, her complexion, the dominant tones of the surroundings, and what might be called an unconscious relational intelligence that placed each element in its right proportion; (b) my wife also wore red lipstick against that otherwise brown, white, and black composition — in the restaurant, that single red accent stood out and unsettled the harmony I otherwise perceived in her; she had hesitated at home and kept it only for ease; yet in the red car, that same red dissolved entirely into the dominant colour of the surroundings and became part of a compact whole — a harmony I find sufficiently beautiful without any further addition, purple for instance. The conclusion I reached: for me, brown, white, and black constitute the base (the normal), while red is the intruder that stands out — unless the entire environment is red, in which case red is “swallowed” and saved because it merges into the dominant tone. The philosophical discussion that followed located this aesthetic profile within the following coordinates: (1) closest to *Karl Mannheim* and his relationism, with strong aesthetic support from *Immanuel Kant* — I seek objective justification in the object and its spatial relations, I observe how things are arranged, but my ultimate goal is classical peace, not relation for its own sake; (2) close to *Vladimir Tkalčić* and his theory of ambience by sensibility, but slightly further than *Kant* and *Mannheim*, because *Tkalčić* flirts with relativism — he acknowledges that meaning shifts from person to person and from epoch to epoch, whereas I seek objective higher ground; (3) at the core, a Platonist in the finest, artistic sense — harmony must be the point of departure and the eternal source, within which one explores richness and beauty; and here *Aristotle* stands nearer to me than *Plato* in one precise sense: where *Plato* locates harmony in a transcendent world of Forms, *Aristotle* finds it embodied in the mean, in the well-proportioned relation of parts within a concrete whole — which is exactly where I find it too, in the room, on the street, in a person's dress. The Renaissance architect *Leon Battista Alberti* captures this with the concept of *concinnitas*: the absolute accord of all parts within a whole, such that nothing can be added or removed without destroying it — which is precisely my definition of a well-designed car, a well-dressed woman, a well-composed interior. As for *Rousseau* — he is my mirror, but an inverted one: he too felt nature and harmony as primary, as the ground before corruption; but where *Rousseau* concluded that civilisation destroys this harmony and we must return to nature, I conclude the opposite — that civilisation, at its best, is the only instrument capable of achieving and sustaining harmony. I am not nostalgic for the pre-social; I am demanding of the social and basic perfection with freedom. It is now — the rare thing in fact. The final philosophical diagnosis from the discussion: **“Tragic Romantic Classicist (Essentialist)”** — I require that harmony exist as ground, and within it I pursue variety and movement. Change is my instrument, not my

Two things, in my view, precede or are simultaneous with everything else mentioned: KNOWLEDGE/OBSERVATION and LAW. Knowledge or observation: here I equate the two for simplicity, and knowledge is also a process; perhaps observation is the better word. Observation must be made possible (by Someone or Something that also has knowledge, or knowledge is by itself), and it must be “made possible” just like the general law. Only then follow the will, essence, existence, ethics, science, and so on. Potential is infinite, and small laws are infinite. If they are also finite, they are infinite in finitude. But essence is also part — of the general law. God, the universe, and the human being therefore first exist. Let me arrange it thus: we do not jump out of nothingness — we jump out of potential and out of something; everything jumps out of potential, including Being itself, and only the Supra-Being is, and does not jump out of nothing because it is fullness, and observation is jumping. Potential is something, not nothing. We have a first essence which is part of the general law of existence. We have a second essence which is created after our knowledge, our will, our knowledge, existence, time, ethics, aesthetics, and everything that simultaneously precedes and parallel accompanies and builds our second essence, and later our second death or “second” life.

When we believe certain philosophers or prophets, we confirm their reality. I believe that time is relative, but I did not immediately know or feel that, nor do I know it now. I “believed” Einstein and questioned my own practical intuition, which gave me confusions and questions. Einstein, however, did not only find and discover a law — we and he together created it. Because the relativity of time is a lower law than the law of existence and matter and the individual material or spiritual laws. The relativity of time means precisely — relativity. That is the catch, not in the formula which absolutely shows the relativity of some phenomenon. The formula itself is as real as it is relative; people do not understand this, and I

goal; and reason within relation demands subordination to something greater than ourselves — which is also the definition of the highest aesthetic and moral intelligence. In the context of this book: the same relational and essentialist principle I apply to aesthetics I find operating in the observation of suicidal processes — not as isolated events, but as the disruption of the base (existential harmony) by an intruder (privation of being) that the environment has failed to “swallow” and neutralise. The parallel is not accidental.

claim it, even if strange. We have not only “discovered” the secrets of certain lesser laws — we co-create them. Who else would have thought we could fly everywhere, even to the Moon, or cure pneumonia? Our decisions are not wrong or mistaken.

Our decisions are mistaken (which is a slippery concept, but I must use it) only when they spoil our first essence and our begun second one. A human being is not less of a human being when evil. A human being is less of a human being when becoming an “inhuman”, or like an animal or a thing or potential. That is why my grandmother’s way of dying was ethically minimally wrong, miserable, and without bad consequences — but it was an ontological failure and shock, and a sin of the first degree of weight (not of ethics and punishment). This for my grandmother’s death probably no one in the world has stated. Why should I seek philosophy further from the black, bloody bed where a person sleeps peacefully, one with whom I will no longer exchange a greeting here? How is it that I came at the same time to the hospital, after several hours, when she had just died? How did I know and feel that she would die? Why does her image repel me — because of the bitter truth of what a person turns into, or because of the lie? All this caused in me a restlessness in which I might, because of that knowledge while she was still alive, have sinned ethically. For I saw exactly how things would end, even though I am neither a prophet nor a doctor. My ethical sin then — anger, swearing, or what would have been betrayal (sending her to a home), or attack, or anything — would have been in accordance with my initial ontological position and my psyche; but it would not only have spoiled my own ethics and image and broken other moral and state laws and the laws of love and patience, without improving either her ethics or essence; it would also spoil my own essence and existence, regardless of how it ended for her.

Hell is not only nine circles, nor is heaven only nine circles. If we set aside that illness is only a genetic and character stripping in old age, here it is often a matter of additional and exponential corruption of our corruptible essence in all its parts. But if the direction was — against corruption during youth, that is what I “wish to save”. There remains the question whether anyone works against “himself as himself”. Theoretically, one can commit a

senseless sin, but in reality I think that place is empty and no one has filled it. We all in fact work in accordance with “the self”, but not only with “original sin” or circumstances, genetic laws, environment, or habit in this fallen or at least “tense” nature; rather, our will confirms the existing state at birth and largely wishes to transcend it. This can be through habits or outside habits which by that very fact also undermine our habits. But our salvation is not from without, even if we look at Christianity (for not all are “saved”). This is strange to people. Our salvation is from ourselves, from blindness and from a decision which on death too can be “bad” (regardless of motives, punishments, grace, and justice). Even love, which is the essence of fullness and action, goes after knowledge or in parallel with knowledge and observation in every entity of existence. It does not matter whether we flee from habit into chaos, from school onto the street, or vice versa. We cannot and will not in the end flee from ourselves, in neither the negative nor the positive sense. Here I nonetheless sharply oppose the logic that we therefore have no freedom for further work.

“BEING AND POTENTIAL” AGAINST “BEING AND TIME” OR “BEING AND NOTHINGNESS”

Without entering too deeply into the meanings of potential or those four Aristotelian causes, I view potential as a certain lower possibility and level of Being. Nothingness does not exist, and time is only in another form everywhere; that potential is wider than reality, not higher than reality in the Heideggerian sense. Potential, I would say, is unrealised (fully or partially) reality, and a privation of reality itself, but not the complete absence of reality and of the roots of reality itself. The end of the whole process is in fact that conceptually and existentially harmonised entelechy. It does not matter whether potential is Aristotelian as inner power, or as Aquinas’ state through which beings receive being and life from God, or some variants of freedom and projection into the present and future as mystery. The beyond is not separated from this side, while this side is separated (although also partially). That is why religious or paranormal mysticism, prayer, abstract thinking, and other drives of spirit and body are

a link to that meta-cosmology. The sentences seem so precise and imprecise that they appear to be a poor copy of textbook text, but they are precisely the result of my personal conviction that emanation goes from the beyond — through asymmetry and the fullness of monism into this world and back. And this happens constantly or in parallel. The process goes solely from “the other” into “this” and back, and our potentialities (not now potentials) choose only among the multitude of paths by which parallel paths are eliminated. There are only two main directions of spirit, and the other foreign and our own paths are secondary manifestations.

My approach is, through radical sincerity, to prove the necessities of a non-radical stance and the non-binarity of life. Since everyone wants a simplified solution and an external scapegoat, this looks useless in every position, both the independent and the dependent. But here is that line which I draw satisfied. I have spoken much and said little. That is for me the peak. The worst would be if I had said — nothing in all that. The Renaissance cannot be without realism, nor vice versa.

“MY” “TEN COMMANDMENTS” AND THE END

These my ten commandments are not my innovation, nor copied, nor absolutely correct — but they are an attempt at the desacralisation and demystification of anxiety as a known secret or unknown truth. They are my choice of ten cards which I consider closest to a higher truth.

- 1) The law of the impossibility of zero and minus.**
- 2) The eternity of potential and the eternity of the spirit of human beings, God, and Being, and of some animals.**
- 3) The irreversibility of Being and the relativity of time.**
- 4) Aesthetics and ethics as responsibility and as the fulfilment of essence and existence.**
- 5) Suicide as illusion and suicidality as a creator of depression!**
- 6) Hell as ontological invalidity.**
- 7) The dialectic of the third and the encounter, and of the gaze through active observation in creation.**
- 8) The ownness of un-ownness, or the un-ownness of ownness, in “death” and in life.**
- 9) The perfection of the already developed Supra-Being together with equal human co-creation — not just one, and in no way the building of an absolute common Spirit as such, but of togetherness.**
- 10) Knowledge and will as the eyeglasses and constructive instrument, that is, a window through two states of life, against the inertia of dying and the short-term renewal of “cells”.**

Are we then being-toward-death or being-toward-eternity? This somewhat confused collection of my thoughts and struggles does not offer a wiser explanation than the similar history of the human mind. But it points to the statistically and value-wise great possibility that this depends, in its significant if not yet absolute part, on our answer and decision. On this depends, not only morally, surreally, and otherwise — but, for me, epistemological-ontologically.

THE FORMULA OF TRANSITION: SPIRITUAL (IN)THERMODYNAMICS

*Syntropy, entropy and will as physical and ontological laws
in the experience of dying, falling and salvation*

* * *

I. INTRODUCTION: WHY A FORMULA?

This book was never conceived as a work of mathematics. Yet at its close — when the experiential, philosophical and theological arguments have been exhausted — one question remains that verbal synthesis cannot fully answer: can what we call spiritual transformation, a syntropic transition or a saving encounter be expressed in a form that transcends metaphor? What follows is the conclusion of this long and difficult book.

"I have resolved to set aside **Nietzsche's** idea of *cyclical recurrence*, since it strikes me as one possible description of a law — revolutionary for its time, but not the only one. I have set aside **Schopenhauer's** notion of a *hungry will without a source*, for I hold that the will has a source and that source is not empty. I have set aside **Hegel's** model from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* — the self-unfolding of Spirit through history — because history is not always synthesis, nor spirit always progress. I have set aside **Mainländer's** *model of the destruction of spirit* as cosmic necessity, because syntropy exists and information is conserved. I have set aside Parmenides as well — his notion of a full, *static being* — and, equally, total relativism from the opposite pole. I have set aside the idea of *parallel universes*, though not of parallel, or extra-temporal, dimensions beyond this one.

On this question I am not a **Platonist** but an **Aristotelian**. Nor am I a follower of **Tegmark**, for whom mathematics is the necessary and most fundamental layer of reality. On that reading, the fuller and the more real

would have to spring out of the emptier — being, as it were, out of nothingness, in the manner of **Heidegger's** *Sein aus dem Nichts*. Here I take a nominalist position. The expression $1 + 1$ stands for one imagined concrete apple and another of the same kind, two objects which we then describe as *two things of the same kind*. My position is, more precisely, intuitionist, and perhaps constructivist: without a mind, there is no calculation. To say that a cotton shirt holds together because of such-and-such a law is meaningful only if there is a shirt, cotton, and an act of holding-together. If none of these is present, the law is a fiction. It is not a *potential* subsisting as an infinite possibility within the frame of an observer or a law-maker; if it were, we would already be in the territory of **Parmenides**, or of **Mainländer** — the view that everything already is, and that we simply do not know it. From that view I deliberately step away. A mathematical law, like any other, exists only where there is a mind and a universe in which it can be exhibited. We possess no demonstration of pure spirit, nor of a multiverse.

When I speak of *potential* in the eye of the *Observer*, I mean precisely that: such potential does not *exist* in the full sense, but *is* potential. Remove the Observer, and what remains is not even potential, but an abstraction unreachable by anyone, of which one cannot say whether it exists at all, or in how many forms. The fact that we are the only beings able to interpret the laws is precisely what relativises both sides of the question and compels a choice. Science itself is not beyond dispute, let alone philosophy and intuition — though the latter two, as I have argued in earlier passages, often move alongside science with considerable force, sometimes predictively.

Why is potential not static? Because persons who, for example, were never born simply do not exist. Being is not so densely packed that everything is everywhere. In the Mind of God, or in our own, there is the possibility of such a being, and even a degree of foreseeability; but the possibility remains, within our minds, bounded. God and we alike are dynamic, which means that — consciously or otherwise — we limit freedom in order to

possess it. Setting aside the deeper question of the uncausedness of God or of the universe, if God is both omnipotent and dynamic, and if this world is of such a kind, then He is not burdened by the requirement that everything must exist; rather, He may hold something only in mind and may withdraw it. Being, in other words, can be *withdrawn* without being annihilated. To insist otherwise is to flee back toward an omniscient, static *Over-Being*, and to ignore the possibility that the freedom granted to a being is itself omnipotent — meaning that any law and any character may yet be further developed. If Spirit stands outside time, it is not linearly static but dynamic in depth; God, accordingly, is of the same character, and cannot, as it were, *be bored*. The very idea — and power — that we should feel and think in a manner analogous to His own renders His existence meaningful, though not necessary. We are, in that sense, evidence of God's non-static nature.

No one knows the end. What I have wished to indicate, however, is the suggestion that *the Kingdom of God* begins precisely at this point: in our discovery, here, of relations and lawfulness, and in the recognition that death is not merely a *transition* into another life, but, in a sense, the fullness of *this* life — a life greater than life itself. The notion of a *timeless state* is not reserved for what comes after death. We are, here and now, already outside our own time at every moment — a difficulty already noted by **Hegel**. What matters is not the precise coincidence of our utterance *now* with the exact instant (which, by the time we speak, has already become a new *now*), but rather that our images shift continually, are largely already accumulated or past, and that dynamics and meaning — like morality — exceed physical law while still obtaining. We can only transpose certain cosmological rules onto these matters by analogy, on the assumption that being is the common element; much else remains unknown. For of death, and indeed of knowledge, in a radically Socratic sense one cannot truly know anything from the position of a great yet finite human mind, working with partial truths from which some variable is always missing — as in any genuine paradox. I would sooner say: I exist, therefore I still exist; or, I feel, therefore I exist; or, it is possible that I exist because I think — and so on. Both being and the being-of-a-being would have to be addressed, while

nothingness might be left as an unspoken question. The proper emphasis would lie, perhaps, on the indemonstrability of nothingness, or of the past or future of being, rather than on the reverse. The *statistical-cosmological rescue* advanced today is itself undemonstrated, and is more a philosophical manoeuvre than a physical one — though contemporary physicalism, far from drifting away from theology, increasingly walks alongside it in mutual struggle and convergence. The unique cause of our state — $N = 1$ — yields no statistical probability whatsoever; it is the exception of an exception, either a causal accidental flash, or a creation.

Were Being everywhere already saturated, we would be quite literally compressed within the world, and a fresh primordial burst would be required. And why, indeed, should universes be separate, if such saturation held? It is at this point that the misreading of withdrawal must be set aside. When Being withdraws, it does not leave nothingness behind; it leaves an extension — a space in which something new can come to be. The image is that of a room one has built oneself and then left: the room does not pass into nothingness upon one's leaving, but becomes a room without the builder, retaining its walls, its air, the history of the labour that shaped it. What has changed is not the being of the room, but the relation of the one who has stepped out of it. Absolute nothingness, on closer inspection, cannot be thought without contradiction, for the moment one thinks it, it is already something. Nothingness is therefore always relational, never absolute: it is the negation of a particular being from the standpoint of one who expected that being to be present. The withdrawal of Being is, in this sense, an act of love rather than a loss — a making of room for what is not yet, which is precisely the condition under which freedom, novelty and the other can arise at all. The kabbalistic *tzimtzum* and the Christian *kenosis* both name this insight from their own sides: that the Infinite contracts, or empties itself, so that the finite may come to stand. Without such a withdrawal, no creature, no choice, no genuine encounter would be possible. Being that withdraws does not vanish; it gives place.

I have set aside moral theology as the sole axis of the transcendent, and I use sin and morality as an ordered, hierarchical and ontological bond — or the severing of that bond. The point is not to say something new for the sake of it — it is to have a position for life, and to connect the laws of body and spirit. From the outset I also set aside the ideas of 'cracks' or 'flashes'.

I align myself with **Kant** and his necessary *postulates* (which we all have) — but in a (bio)centric spirit, and in light of new discoveries in physics and biology I extend his transcendentalism and individualism towards a biocentric *we*. The other chapters and phenomena in this book are for me simply phenomena through which I discover the laws of spirit and the analogies between the laws of matter and relational relativity. Irrespective of the determinism of information that creates paths of least resistance — the law genuinely exists. Yet I see in this neither unfreedom nor the absence of love. I see 'observational power'. My model is **Viktor Frankl** as logotherapist and his original works.

A further clarification is in order. The reciprocity of *syntropy* and *entropy* — the appearance that one perpetually feeds the other, that the two are locked in stable mutual exchange — is itself a short-term illusion. What looks like reciprocity is only the transfer of energy across a threshold not yet crossed: a temporary rearrangement that postpones, but does not annul, the binary outcome. At the level of any closed sequence — a life, a relationship, a civilisation, the cosmos itself — the result is binary. *Syntropy* prevails or *entropy* prevails. There is no third state in which the two are reconciled and held indefinitely.

This binary is not a moral simplification but an ontological structure. To live in time is to live within an unresolved oscillation; but every oscillation has a final reading, and that reading falls on one side. The formulae of section IV describe how this outcome is *prepared* — not how it is avoided.

What allows this structure to be more than a bleak determinism is not relativism — not the softening of truth and law into contextual

negotiation — but *relationalism*: the recognition that being is disclosed and enriched through relation, without becoming dependent upon it. This is not **Hegel's** synthesis, though it resembles it from a distance. Hegel's dialectic dissolves the opposing terms into a higher unity; the disjunction is *aufgehoben*, overcome. Here, the disjunction is preserved. *Syntropy* and *entropy* do not resolve into a third term; they remain what they are, and it is precisely their irreducible opposition that generates the richness of being — the fullness that relation makes visible without producing. The *Observer* does not create potential; the *Observer* discloses it. The relation does not generate the binary; it is the medium through which the binary becomes inhabitable.

One instance demands explicit treatment: suicide. It is tempting to read it as the decisive act by which the binary is *chosen* — as though the individual, in ending the temporal sequence voluntarily, forecloses the outcome by an act of will. But this reading mistakes the gesture for the structure. Suicide is not the imposition of *entropy* upon a life that was otherwise tending toward *syntropy*; it is, in the cases that matter philosophically, the terminal expression of a process already long underway — a process in which *entropy* had already been winning, quietly, at the level of relation, meaning, and the capacity of the *Observer* to hold potential open. The act is late in the sequence, not first.

What this reveals is something more fundamental: that the boundary between life and death, between the living process and its cessation, is not fixed at the biological threshold. *Entropy* enters a life long before it ends it, and *syntropy* can persist — can even intensify — in the proximity of death, as those who have sat beside the dying know. Our relation to both is woven into us independently of age, of circumstance, of the particular shape the sequence takes. A child can be closer to the entropic foreclosure than an old man still capable of relation and wonder; a person at the edge of biological life can be more fully inhabiting *syntropy* than one who is, by every external measure, thriving.

This is not a consolation. It is a structural observation: that what we call living and what we call dying are not opposites placed at either end of the sequence, but qualities distributed unevenly across it — and that the binary outcome is decided not at the moment of death but in the accumulated weight of every relation, every act of observation, every foreclosure or opening of potential that preceded it.

The depth of the binary lies on two levels at once: the *immanent* (the closure of the temporal sequence: a life ends in *syntropy* or in *entropy*) and the *transcendent* (the standing of the released information before the *Observer*: it is gathered into the *Supra-Being* or dispersed into informational silence). The two are continuous, not parallel. The binary of the immanent decides the binary of the transcendent, and the transcendent sets the condition under which the immanent binary becomes intelligible. The interplay is what unfolds before the doors close.

Independently of all this, there exists a diametrically opposite position that would need to be built substantially upon *nihilism and quantum science* or upon the paranormal. If something like that came together and held up to reason, I'd take it. Even so, I would probably no longer think suicidally. I might live under different values, but in the end not so differently from how I live now. And that is the point about the closeness of all ideas: we have to take a position, because that is what we are — beings who need one. Entropy is not something anyone really sees as an ideal — or even as the whole picture."

— Bartul Marušić, *mag. iur.*, Zagreb, 2026.

This further section was developed in collaboration with two AI systems — Google Gemini and Claude Sonnet 4.6 (Anthropic) — in a multi-hour (and days) of final research session (started) on **7 May 2026**. It is important to emphasise: the entire session was composed **exclusively of the author's own assumptions, intuitions and choices** — those that grew from the core of this book, from the philosophical and theological position

the author holds, and from the personal experience and hope that underpin that position. Gemini proposed the mathematical structure of the formulaic framework; Claude then verified the physical consistency, cross-referenced the relevant literature and produced the final redaction. **All assumptions, variables and the values framework belong to the author.** The AI systems were a tool for mathematical structuring, not a source of content.¹

This approach is academically honest and — more importantly — *proof of the responsible use of AI as a demanding intellectual tool*, rather than a means of obtaining a ready-made answer or essay. The author seeks here no substitute for his own thinking, but rather *a mathematical mirror for a position he reached independently* — through logic, the schools he studied, experience and hope — on his own terms, after everything he has been through.

The result is not absolute proof. It is a formal *analogy* — a mathematically consistent model that uses physical laws as a scaffold for spiritual dynamics. Yet this analogy corroborates the author's philosophical, theological and psychological position, reached freely and independently. The same epistemic status was held by *Mainländer* when he spoke of the "will towards death" as a cosmic force,⁸ and by Frankl when he grounded logotherapy in the "*existential vacuum*" as a measurable psychological quantity.⁹ We add one further step: an explicit probabilistic framework grounded in the thermodynamics of information.

II. LAWS AND AUTHORITIES: THE PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE ANALOGY

The formulae that follow rest upon the physical laws and concepts listed below. They are employed here by analogy — not as empirical proof, but as a structural framework that organises the experiential and philosophical material:

➤ **The Second Law of Thermodynamics (*Boltzmann, Shannon*):**¹ Every isolated system tends towards maximum entropy — the dissolution of information and order. Boltzmann formulated entropy mathematically as a measure of disorder ($S = k \cdot \ln W$); Shannon demonstrated that the same mathematical pattern applies to the measure of informational deficiency. Both original papers are available in their original editions and are cited from primary sources. This law also tends towards "cooling" and "oscillation"; we likewise draw upon the **First Law** of the indestructibility of energy, at least as a model towards a binary world in its multiple dimensions.

➤ **Luigi Fantappiè — syntropy:**² The Italian mathematician's 1942 Unified Theory of the Physical and Biological World argues that living systems are subject not only to entropy but also to an opposing force — *syntropy* — the tendency towards order, purposiveness and attraction towards future states (attractors). Syntropy is what Fantappiè calls "the law of life": final causes, teleology as a physical category. Fantappiè's work is cited from original academic surveys.

➤ **Susskind and Hawking — conservation of information:**³ Information is never lost — not even in black holes. Susskind calls this the "minus-first law of physics": the law that precedes all others. Susskind's original account is available in *The Black Hole War* (2008); the joint

paper by Hawking, Perry and Strominger was published in *Physical Review Letters* (2016) and is cited accordingly.

➤ **Einstein — time dilation:**⁴ An observer moving through linear time and an observer "outside" it have an asymmetric experience of causality and force. This asymmetry is the physical basis for distinguishing between the subject who is falling into inertia and the mediator who acts from within time upon a timeless accumulation. Einstein's original paper of 1905 is cited from its original publication in *Annalen der Physik*. "Relation" is moreover something that, in objective events, emphasises this mutuality.

➤ **Newton — the First Law of inertia:**⁵ "Every body perseveres in its state of being at rest or of moving uniformly straight forward, except insofar as it is compelled to change its state by forces impressed." In the spiritual analogy: a spirit in descent remains in descent until it encounters a syntropic impulse from without. That fall is finite at the physical level, but informationally extended — at the level of oscillation and of distinct yet existing worlds. The mediator is that impulse, and entropy is *being-towards-potential* — not towards death in any pejorative or phenomenological sense. Newton's original text is cited from *Principia Mathematica* (1687).

These laws together form the physical framework for the concrete situations analysed throughout this book: the grandmother sinking into the inertia of passive dying; the grandfather who leaves an informational record that endures beyond physical death; the father who, with external support, sustains his will in spite of neurological decline.

* * *

III. ASSUMPTIONS AND VARIABLES OF THE MODEL

All the assumptions and variables that follow are **exclusively the author's own**. They are defined on the basis of the experiential, philosophical and theological position set out throughout this book — a position the author reached entirely independently, through the logic, intellectual traditions and lived experience he has pursued. The algorithmic systems gave them mathematical form alone.

Ontological Assumptions

1. **Spirit as an information system.** Spirit is not a metaphor — it is a real informational entity with a measurable density of record. The denser and more coherent the record (love, meaning, prayer, memory, deed), the greater the system's *syntropy*. The more fragmented it is (inertia, hatred, indifference, forgetting), the more it slides towards entropic dissolution.

2. **Will as a tensor.** Will is not a scalar quantity ("strong" or "weak") — it is a *tensor*: a force possessing both magnitude and direction in a multidimensional informational space. A misdirected will can amplify entropy rather than syntropy.

3. **Information is conserved.** Every act of love, observation, prayer and action remains inscribed in the horizon of events of the subject's existence — even when the subject is no longer aware of it. This is a direct application of the Susskind–Hawking principle.³

4. **The Bridge (Christ / the Supra-Being) as the perfect syntropic channel towards irreversible Fullness and freedom.** In the author's panentheistic ontology, the Supra-Being is not abstract — it is an attractive force operating as a fixed constant in the model, analogous to gravity in physical equations. Without this postulate the formulae are mathematically consistent but stripped of their ultimate meaning.

Definition of Variables

- **Ψ_{sub}** — the state of the subject (person in spiritual descent / inertia): an entity of high entropy that has accumulated experience without integrating it into syntropic order.
- **Ψ_{most}** — the state of the Bridge (Christ / the Supra-Being): the perfect syntropic attractor, constant and independent of the subject's will.
- **$\hat{I}_{\text{sup}}$ ($\hat{T}_{\text{sup}}$)** — the mediator: the active informational node that transmits coherent information towards the subject from within linear time.
- **I_{quality}** — the depth and density of the mediator's information: a measure of how well the information can "match the frequency" of the subject's inner record. This is not the same as volume or intensity.
- **E_{res}** — residual inertia: the subject's resistance to change, accumulated through a history of fragmented decisions.
- **n** — the unknown factor of grace / chance: the component that remains beyond complete formalisation and corresponds to what theology calls *gratuitas* — a gift that is not a necessary consequence of the input variables.
- **ϕ** — the "anti-person" factor: external interfering factors that increase ambient noise and impede the reception of information.
- **σ** — the coefficient of love / quantum entanglement between mediator and subject: a measure of shared history and shared syntropy.
- **γ** — the ego / resistance factor: the degree to which the subject's residual inertia is active and reactive.

IV. THE FINAL FORMULAE OF SPIRITUAL THERMODYNAMICS

The notation that follows is borrowed from physics by *formal analogy*; the equations are not predictive in the empirical sense and are not intended as such. This section presents the synthesis of the formulaic framework that emerged from the author's assumptions, Gemini's mathematical structure and Claude's consistency verification. The formulae are not empirically verified in any laboratory sense — they are *formal analogies* with the same epistemic status as Mainländer's "will towards death"⁸ or Frankl's "existential void"⁹: conceptual tools that organise experiential and philosophical material into a coherent framework. The difference is that *we today possess physical laws that were unavailable to Mainländer and Nietzsche* — and we employ them transparently and with appropriate measure.

I. The Equation of Quantum Resonance — Probability of Transition (P_s)

Measures the probability that the fallen subject (Ψ_{sub}) — through the mediation of the mediator ($\hat{I}_{\text{sup}}$) — will make contact with the Bridge (Ψ_{most}):

$$P_s = |\langle \Psi_{\text{most}} | \hat{I}_{\text{sup}} | \Psi_{\text{sub}} \rangle|^2 \cdot I_{\text{quality}} / (E_{\text{res}} + n)$$

$\hat{I}_{\text{sup}}$: the operator — the mediator who adjusts frequency.
 I_{quality} : the depth of the information (the mediator's chief asset). **E_{res}** : the residual inertia (resistance) of the subject. **n** : the unknown factor of grace / chance.

Logic: The matrix element $\langle \Psi_{\text{most}} | \hat{I}_{\text{sup}} | \Psi_{\text{sub}} \rangle$ describes how well the mediator "translates" the subject's state into the language of the Bridge. Squaring yields the actual probability, following Born's rule in

quantum mechanics. The larger I_quality, the disproportionately greater P_s — information of quality is not additive but *multiplicative*.

II. The Formula of Syntropic Tension — Cumulative Potential (Φ)

Defines the total influence that the mediator accumulates and transmits from linear time into the timeless state of the subject:

$$\Phi = \int [t=0 \rightarrow T] (V_will \cdot S_intr) / D_inf \cdot dt$$

- **V_will**: the mediator's active effort (work, prayer, thought, deed).
- **S_intr**: the intrinsic syntropy of the Bridge — a constant attractive force independent of the mediator.
- **D_inf**: the informational distance of the subject from the Bridge (measuring "spiritual fog").

Logic: The integral over time conveys that the mediator's work is not a single act — it accumulates as potential energy in the horizon of events of the subject's existence. Susskind's principle is decisive here: every act of the mediator *remains inscribed*, even when the subject is unaware of receiving it.³ Even the grandmother's "yes, I love you" in her final conscious moment is an informational record confirming that the cumulative Φ had been stored across years of mediation.

III. The Equation of Exponential Collision — The Double-Edged Sword (ΔE)

Computes the risk of accelerated dissolution in the event of the subject's active rejection of information:

$$\Delta E_{final} = \gamma \cdot (I_{sup} \cdot A_{anti})^2$$

- **ΔE** : the increase in entropy (chaos) in the event of rejection.
- **γ** : the subject's ego / resistance factor.
- **A_{anti}** : the influence of "anti-persons" (negative external factors, entropic environment).

Logic: The quadratic growth means that strong information from the mediator, if actively rejected, *accelerates dissolution* — because the friction between syntropic pressure and entropic resistance generates thermal chaos. This is the "double-edged sword" of the mediator's role: it multiplies both the probability of salvation and the risk of deeper collapse. The closer one is to the Bridge when rejected — the harder the impact, though the trace left is also the deeper.

IV. The Formula of the Probability Factor — The Multiplier K

Measures how much the presence of the mediator statistically increases the probability of transition relative to the subject's isolated entropy:

$$K = P_{sup} / P_o = e^{(I_{ti} \cdot R / \sigma)}$$

- **I_{ti}** : the density of the mediator's information ("syntropic charge").
- **R** : resonance — how well the information "strikes" the subject's core and the frequency of the inner record.
- **σ** : ambient noise (anti-persons and the subject's own internal entropy).

Assessment: If the mediator is a "highly effective" source (high I_{ti} , good resonance R , low noise σ), K realistically falls between 5 and 10 — meaning that the probability of transition is 500% to 1000% greater than without the mediator. The subject's own inertia, without external impulse, keeps the probability of transition between 2% and 5% — a system tending towards rest. This is not speculation: it is a Bayesian estimate grounded in known parameters.⁶

V. The Formula of the State of Spirit — Dynamics of Change ($\Delta\Psi$)

Describes the net change in the subject's state as a function of the mediator's force, the informational weight of shared history, and the angle of alignment:

$$\Delta\Psi = (F_{sup} + I_{mem}) \cdot \cos(\vartheta) / E_{tot}$$

- **F_{sup}**: the force with which the mediator pushes (his will and energy).
- **I_{mem}**: the weight of information from the past — shared syntropy, what the author shares with the subject.
- **cos(θ)**: the angle of the mediator's spirit's alignment with the Bridge. If $\theta = 0^\circ$, the mediator looks directly towards the Bridge; if $\theta = 180^\circ$, he is fleeing from it and pulling the subject in the wrong direction.
- **E_{tot}**: the subject's total entropy (the greater it is, the harder to set in motion).

Logic: The cosine of angle θ indicates that it is not enough to be a forceful mediator — one must be an *aligned mediator*. Even strong will that is misdirected yields a zero or negative change of state ($\cos 90^\circ = 0$; $\cos 180^\circ = -1$). This is what the author describes as the difference between *co-salvation* and the attempt to "save at any cost" that destroys both mediator and subject.

V. APPLICATIONS TO EXPERIENTIAL CASES FROM THE BOOK

The model is not abstract. It describes concrete situations analysed in the preceding chapters — and the very fact that they can now be expressed in formal language confirms that the intuition running through this book possesses a structure that exceeds mere personal testimony.

The grandmother in the inertia of passive dying: high E_{res} (resistance to activity), extinguished V_{will} (her own will reduced to a minimum), high D_{inf} (informational distance from the Bridge — her semantic world narrowed to routine and sleep). Without an external syntropic impulse, P_s tends towards zero. The author as mediator ($\hat{I}_{sup}$) intervenes: brings supplements, remains present, builds Φ over years. The subject's A_{anti} (refusal of activity, denial of the need for treatment) keeps ΔE_{final} high. Outcome: biological death — yet the informational record remains. Her "yes, I love you" in her last conscious moment is confirmation that the cumulative Φ had reached its threshold and been stored.

The grandfather dying in the care home: a case of "sealed inertia" — outwardly everything appears stable ($F_{net} \approx 0$), yet $E_{res} > S_{most}$. Resistance outweighs the Bridge's attractive force because the motivational foundation (his wife) has gone. The mediator's role is to be ∇_{ti} — the informational gradient that changes the *vector*, not the mass. "Damn nature and the sun," the grandfather says. The sun no longer moves anyone who has lost their *reason* to move. This holds for both grandfathers and for "egotistic" drives in the broader sense.

Father in neurological and cardiac decline — the key example of asymmetry (and of active forgiveness towards the grandfather, despite dissociations): the father is at a more advanced stage of ataxia than the grandfather was at the point of his own decline, and is objectively more gravely ill biologically, although younger. Yet V_{will} remains active — he wants to get up, to attend appointments, to talk. The system demonstrates

that the entropy of the body and the syntropy of the spirit can operate in *complete asymmetry*. Spirit may grow while the body decays, though at a pace slower than the scientific average. After each crisis, if will remains active and the mediator remains present, a measurable change occurs: the father returns to himself, recognises, speaks, becomes more present. These are *tangible differences in state — changes that are seen and measured*. They are not accidental: they are evidence that the syntropic impulse of the mediator (the shared positive bond between us) ($\hat{I}_{sup}$), meeting a will that has not been extinguished, produces a real change of state $\Delta\Psi$. This case is, in the author's view, one of the strongest proofs that syntropy is not a reductively biological category, but an informational one — and that Fantappiè's intuition had an empirical basis.

The author's own changes of state: the author recognises the same pattern in himself. Through the crises described in this book — depressive episodes, separations, losses, divorce, infertility, suicidality — every time that informational contact with the Bridge (through prayer, creativity, work, observation, meaning) was active, a measurable change $\Delta\Psi$ occurred. This is not merely a metaphor but today's life, his marriage, successes and the gathering of family. It is the personal experience that the formula describes retrospectively — and which the author recognises as the foundation of his own position towards life.

VI. MAINLÄNDER, NIETZSCHE AND THE PHYSICAL CROWN OF INTUITION

Philipp Mainländer, with an intuition that far exceeded his available means, concluded that being tends towards nothingness and that this tendency is a cosmic necessity. That intuition was not without foundation — *it was correct insofar as it recognised entropy as a real law*. The problem was that Mainländer did not have Fantappiè. He did not have Susskind. He did not have Shannon. He lacked the conceptual apparatus that would have allowed him to set alongside entropy its opposing force — syntropy — and to demonstrate that information is conserved. His equation was therefore incomplete: he saw half of physics and drew from it a whole metaphysics.

Friedrich Nietzsche, for his part, did not formulate a philosophy of dissolution, but one of *cyclical renewal* — eternal recurrence as the sole ontological constant. His intuition was revolutionary for its time and showed that the law of cyclicity can be applied to existence. Yet eternal recurrence, in physical terms, is *only one of the options* — and not necessarily the most probable. The Second Law of Thermodynamics tells us that systems do not spontaneously return from entropy: an external syntropic impulse is required. Nietzsche called that force the "will to power"; here we define it more precisely: *it is the informational gradient (∇_{ti}) that changes the vector of the fall*. In Nietzsche's recognition of that force — and in Mainländer's denial of it — lies the difference between philosophies that remained as questions and those that became conclusions.⁸

The author of this book occupies a third position: neither Mainländer's pessimistic monism, nor Nietzsche's cyclical neutrality, but *panentheistic affirmationism* — a position reached entirely freely and

independently, on the basis of experience, logic and faith. And now, in this epilogue, that position is supported formally as well: by physical laws unavailable to Mainländer and Nietzsche, yet which today make it possible to verify and build upon the intuitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

EXCURSUS: BETWEEN THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

On Qualitative Information, Syntropic Drift, and the Deficit of Research

The questions gathered in this excursus arose in the course of writing, not from the literature. They are reproduced here as questions — not as a survey of the paranormal, and not as a report on reincarnation research — because the form of the inquiry is part of the content. Philosophy that cannot tolerate its own open questions has already closed itself.

I. The soul desires syntropy — even the fallen

The first question was this: *if fallen angels go wherever identity is unstable, wherever the threshold is lowered by crisis, religious rigidity, or unresolved grief — why do the informational complexes of ordinary dead, those who were neither saints nor criminals, drift at all toward the living? What do they want?*

The answer that holds is not moral but structural: *the soul desires syntropy — even the fallen*. Syntropy is the direction of integration, of identity held together, of meaning that persists. The informational complex of a dead person, unanchored by mediating relations or personal faith, does not drift because it is malevolent; it drifts because it is *destitute*. It lacks the infrastructure that would permit either ascent or stable rest. And in that destitution, it moves — as all deprived things move — toward the nearest available source of what it lacks. This is not reincarnation in the doctrinal sense. It is not the transmigration of a soul. It is the gravitational pull of an

unfinished informational structure toward a living system capable of receiving and integrating it.

II. Why this world, and not another

The question pressed further: *why does this happen within time — in this world, in this child, two decades later, on another continent — rather than in whatever dimension the dead already inhabit?*

Because the timeless cannot observe. It has no point of view, no 'now' from which the act of reception could occur. The dead, considered as released informational complexes, are not agents who choose a destination; they are structures that require a receiver. And receivers exist only in time. This is the ontological privilege of the living: not that we are more real than the dead, but that we alone can *close the circuit*. Without a living Observer, the information persists but is never integrated. Time is not opposed to eternity; time is the medium in which eternity becomes *addressable*.

This is what makes the work of the living — prayer, memory, mediating love, philosophical and theological labour — genuinely effective on behalf of the dead, without requiring that the dead be currently agentive. The qualitative information has been registered; working upon it integrates it; integration closes the circuit that the dead cannot close from their side alone.

III. The line of least resistance: a structural, not a moral category

A child who carries a soldier's detailed memories — the unit, the manner of death, the wife left behind — is not possessed by the soldier. Possession, in the classical Christian understanding, belongs to a different category entirely: fallen non-human spirits, agentive and malevolent. The souls of the dead do not possess. What the child carries is an *informational resonance*: the child's receptive architecture has become coherent with a

transmitted form. The difference is decisive — the first model demands defence, the second demands attentiveness.

Why does the complex settle in *that* child? The line of least resistance is structural, not moral or karmically determined. Children have thinner ego-boundaries, less consolidated identity, higher permeability. Trauma in the source — violent or sudden death — amplifies the signal. A child is not weak in any pejorative sense; a child is *permeable*. As pure water conducts electricity more readily than salt water, not because of quality but because of structure.

IV. The Observer as resistance — and as shield

Here the inquiry became personal, and the personal became theoretical.

The question was: *if my grandfather's informational complex sought anchorage, why not in me? I carry his intellectual inheritance, I have built upon his foundations, I hold his memory with care and with love, however complicated. Why does proximity not guarantee reception?*

The answer, once seen, is uncomfortable: *my stability may be precisely what deflects*. The syntropically coherent Observer — one who holds themselves together through reason, intuition, and discipline — is not a passive receiver. They are an active field. A signal whose frequency is too far from the Observer's integrated frequency does not pass through; it reflects. This is not failure of love. It is a structural mismatch — two waves of similar amplitude but divergent phase that cancel rather than reinforce.

The grandfather, who said of me *'he stands to the side and only observes'*, was describing not a deficiency but a structural fact. The Observer's distance is the condition of their function. I was implicated in the conflict between grandfather and father — not neutral, not outside. A mediator who is inside the primary tension has reduced degrees of freedom. The syntropic coefficient does not collapse, but it is modulated: a

fall from, say, 0.85 to 0.55 on any reasonable scale. Syntropy remains positive and longer than without mediation — but it is not maximal.

There is a further complication: *if the Observer has built upon and beyond the subject — surpassed them in knowledge, moral integration, experiential depth — the very superiority becomes a barrier*. The subject does not receive the signal as continuation; they receive it as a foreign voice that claims to understand them. Too much light in an eye accustomed to darkness is not rescue — it is pain. Dosage is part of the formula.

V. The amplification risk and the paradox of good intention

The strongest mediating impulse does not guarantee syntropic outcome. If the subject is dominantly entropic and the Observer introduces a large syntropic signal, the result may be amplification of oscillation in *both* directions: syntropy rises, but so does entropy, producing a greater fracture rather than a synthesis. The subject at very low syntropic baseline cannot absorb a sudden five-fold input without structural damage.

This is the structural justification for one of the oldest pastoral practices: the gradual, repeated, low-amplitude syntropic intervention. Frankl did not heal the camps with a single act of meaning; he lived meaning daily, in small measures, until the structure rebuilt itself. The mediator who loves strongly must learn to transmit carefully.

VI. Christian families and the deficit of research

A pattern noted in the documented Western literature — though never systematically coded — is that strong reincarnation-type cases appear disproportionately in Christian, especially Catholic and Protestant, families. The surface reading attributes this to cultural openness to the supernatural. The deeper reading is different.

Christian resistance to the word 'reincarnation' is not resistance to spiritual permeability. A family that lives daily with angels, the prayers of

saints, the communication between the living and the dead, the ongoing presence of the deceased in liturgy and memory — that family is, structurally, already permeable to the persistence of identity beyond the body. The label is refused; the channel is open. Bruce Leininger said 'Bullshit' to reincarnation as a concept, and then spent years verifying every detail his son disclosed. His theological resistance did not close the ontological channel; it sharpened the investigation.

The second reason is institutional: the Christian tradition, particularly the Catholic, has preserved a sophisticated apparatus for the *discernment of spirits* — the formal procedure for distinguishing genuine from apparent spiritual phenomena. When something unusual occurs in a Christian family, a recording infrastructure exists. Other traditions subsume such phenomena under theologically untheorised categories; materialist contexts dismiss or medicalise them. The Christian context preserves them as data. The Vatican is institutionally cautious and simultaneously documentarily faithful — a structural ambivalence that produces the very archive secular researchers now find invaluable.

VII. What the research has not done

The inquiry identified several systematic gaps that the existing literature has not addressed and that future research would need to close.

The families of the deceased are not studied. **Tucker and Stevenson** investigate the child who receives; they do not investigate the household of the person whose life the child recalls. Whether that household is spiritually empty, relationally fractured, or simply without anyone to observe and hold — these are uncoded variables. The question of whether the absence of a mediating Observer in the source family correlates with the drift of the informational complex toward a distant receiver has never been systematically posed.

The religious background of receiving families is not coded. Whether the receiving family is Christian, Hindu, materialist, or atheist has not been

recorded as a variable in Stevenson's or Tucker's databases. The consequence is that the pattern observable at the level of individual cases — disproportionate emergence of strong Western cases in Christian families — cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed statistically.

What happens to these children as adults is only partially known. A 2024 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that children with past-life memories grow into normal adults; the only correlated trait is a higher tendency toward *absorption* — deep immersive processing of experience, attentiveness, a disposition toward contemplation. Whether this trait correlates with religious or spiritual orientation in adulthood, whether these individuals become the Observers this framework describes, has not been studied.

VIII. Qualitative information as a syntropic field: a panentheist reading

The observations above invite a synthesis that the empirical literature cannot offer but that the ontological framework of this work can sustain.

Consciousness stands in the background of all these phenomena — not as an epiphenomenon of matter, but as the condition under which matter becomes legible. What the research records as 'past-life memories' are not random accidents, and they are not the return of a personal subject. They are *qualitative information* — structured, affectively weighted, directional — that has crossed the boundary between the timeless and the temporal because it has not yet found its completion. The informational complex of the dead soldier is not wandering aimlessly; it is pulled, as all deprived things are pulled, toward the nearest available source of what it lacks: integration, recognition, the closing of an open structure.

This is not reincarnation; it is not possession; it is not mere coincidence. It is the behaviour of *syntropic information in a panentheist field*: a field in which Being is not static but relational, not closed but open

to completion through the acts of living Observers. In this field, what we call syntropy — the tendency of complex systems toward higher integration — is the immanent face of what theology has called grace: the pull of the good, the pressure of the possible, the invitation of a higher order upon a lower one.

The informational complex that finds a child on another continent is not lost; it has found the line of least resistance toward integration. Whether we call that line grace, or structural resonance, or syntropic field — the phenomenon is the same. And the child who grows into an adult with a disposition toward deep attentiveness, toward the observation that holds things together, is not damaged by the encounter; they are, structurally, the kind of Observer this work has been describing throughout.

Syntropy, in this framework, is not merely a thermodynamic category. It is the image, within time and matter, of what stands beyond time and matter as the condition of all order: what Christian theology calls the good, what Platonic thought calls the Beautiful, what the living know as love when it holds rather than possesses, gives rather than consumes, mediates rather than dominates. The informational complex that seeks integration is, in its own diminished way, seeking the same thing every living Observer seeks: to be whole, to be seen, to be held within a larger order that does not dissolve it but completes it.

This is why syntropy looks, from the inside of a life, like grace. And why grace looks, from the outside of a formal system, like syntropy.

VII. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE AND LIMITS OF THE MODEL

Transparency here is not optional — it is the only honest way to present this work. These formulae arose through iterative AI-assisted elaboration, grounded in the author's own assumptions. They are not empirically verified in any laboratory sense — no more than many models in theoretical physics and philosophy that employ mathematical structures to describe phenomena that are not directly measurable.

The model is not "proof" — it is an attempt to organise experience into a coherent formal language that enables dialogue between theology, philosophy, psychology and physics. In that sense, the use of AI tools here is an example of what honest interdisciplinary work looks like: a person who carries the question, the experience and the assumptions — and a tool that helps structure the answer and check its consistency.

The limitation that the model *deliberately* retains is the factor n — the unknown that corresponds to the theological concept of grace, or to the contingency I found it necessary to add. For what matters is not the solution so much as the process, and the authorship of the final choice, and the mutuality of meaning in love and care. Will, information and syntropy may be optimally aligned — and the transition may still fail to occur. Conversely: a subject of minimal syntropy may undergo a radical turn that no model can predict. That n is not the weakness of the model — *it is its ontological honesty*. Alongside all possible *anti-battles*, *anti-mediators* or unknown truths, I chose not to draw too heavily on a counter-Satanological psychologisation. Nothingness is set aside as the wrong question. Will and dignity remain the axis — but they are also, at the deepest level of human motivation and inner life, mystical and beyond formula.

The n factor is where every philosophical tradition eventually falls silent — or pretends it does not. **Slavoj Žižek**, using instruments remarkably similar to mine — Hegel, logotherapy, biological determinism, the relativity

of all symbolic systems, the parallax of incompatible perspectives — arrives at the constitutive gap and stays there. His diagnosis of the death drive as something that lives *through* us rather than against us is, I think, correct. His reading of the crack in being is precise. But he offers no way through it that does not loop back to the same impasse — because for him, the loop *is* the answer. We are, in his account, condemned not to freedom (that was Sartre) but to a structural gap that ideology will always fill. I find this account honest and insufficient in equal measure. Honest, because the gap is real. Insufficient, because people at the edge of life need more than an elegant description of why the edge exists.

The parallel battle — **free will** versus determinism, the space for God versus the universe without first cause — is one I will not pretend to resolve, because it cannot be resolved from within the universe. What I can say is this: the argument that a universe without cause is logically possible is equally and symmetrically valid as the argument that a God without cause is logically possible. Neither side has a witness from outside. Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, quantum non-locality, the fine-tuning argument — all of these have been claimed by both sides of this debate, and all of them, on examination, prove less than their proponents claim. Quantum effects do not scale to the macro world. Fine-tuning arguments prove design only to those already persuaded. The universe's apparent order proves nothing to those determined to see accident. We are all, in this respect, working with analogy, not with proof. My formula is an analogy. So is materialism. So is Žižek's parallax. The question is which analogy fits the most experience and leaves the fewest things unexplained.

What I cannot get around — and I say this not as theology but as personal record — is the accumulation of events in my own life that fit the hypothesis of a responsive universe better than the hypothesis of indifferent accident. This is *a posteriori* evidence, not *a priori* faith. I did not reason my way to this position. I was argued into it by events — by prayers answered at improbable moments, by the pattern of near-misses that is too consistent to dismiss as coincidence, by the experience of a will that was

broken and rebuilt from outside itself. **Rupert Sheldrake** would say that the mind-field extends beyond the skull and that intention leaves measurable traces. Mainstream science dismisses this. I take the question seriously — not because I accept his conclusions, but because the question is the same one my experience has forced me to ask. And because dismissal is not the same as disproof.

Finally: **Jesus**. He appears in this book as a syntropist — someone who drew maximum syntropy towards those around him, who functioned as the Bridge in its most concrete human form, and whose death and resurrection are, if taken seriously, the ultimate proof that entropy does not have the last word. He is also, from the outside, the supreme example of the double-edged sword: the closer the subjects were to him, the more violently the encounter with truth shook them. The disciples fled. The authorities executed him. The apparent defeat was total. And yet the Φ accumulated over three years of public life changed the course of human history more than any political or military force in the same period. I am not making a theological argument here. I am making a formal observation about the model. If the formula holds, then Jesus is its most extreme and most documented test case — and the result fits.

* * *

VIII. CONCLUSION: THE FORMULA AS EPILOGUE AND PHYSICAL CROWN

Mainländer and Nietzsche did not have Fantappiè, Susskind or Shannon, nor the theory of information — which is also "my" theory, though I did not study physics before, even if I have frequently visited the Faculty of Science where my grandfather retired. We have all of this today — and the responsibility that comes with these tools is not to use them for the sake of erudition alone, but for what the author has claimed from the first page: that experience is measurable, that meaning has a structure, and that every act of love remains inscribed.

If the Supra-Being (Supra-Meaning, in qualitative synthesis rather than a compilation of lower elements) is real — then the formula is not merely a metaphor. It is *a description of a law that holds*. Your will, prayer or deed *changes the probability* — even when you cannot see it, even when the subject refuses, even beyond the threshold of physical death. This is not mysticism. This is physics.

And this is the position of the *positive existential-monist Mainländer*: one who saw the same pain, recognised the same law, yet — through logic, experience and hope — decided that the equation has another side. That alongside entropy there is syntropy. That alongside the fall there is a transition. That alongside inertia there is an impulse. And that this decision — still (and) *free, personal and grounded* — is itself a syntropic act that changes P_s. As observers noted of that famous symbolic image of "the devil and the man": "*Checkmate*" (**Moritz**) — the king can, after all, still move.

Beyond *Pascal's wager* — which I hold, and rationally — I hold also to a syncretism and a consensus that I arrived at rather than planned. Nowhere in any tradition I have seriously examined is suicide a solution or a final truth. Not among believers, not among honest sceptics, not even among the best nihilists — only among those who have stopped asking. That consensus is worth something. And the process by which I reached this position has been *slow* and *mutual*: between death and life, between syntropy and entropy, between spirit and mechanics. To argue about which came first — the chicken or the egg — makes no sense when the task is to keep both alive. The salvation of this life and whatever follows it is a task, especially for those who believe. Atheists too leave doors open here, even if they build more on this side of the threshold.

Life, like love, is a mystery — and a bond between two worlds. How we relate to life *here*, regardless of its causes or results, is already equivalent to how we relate to whatever lies beyond it. That is the necessary struggle — harder than the alternatives, but the only liberating one. Not an escape from contradictions and truths, but the only possible

medicine for both. The division, the crack, the pain — Žižek and others recognise all of this. If they seek acceptance of the gap, those of us who are Christian need patience for both: for the gap and for what fills it. Realism and the impossibility of perfection — alongside the work for both worlds.

That is the only universally supported position. Everything else is, in the end, a kind of defeat — and that is not a great conclusion for serious inquiry to reach. Great science, as Einstein suggested in one form or another, must arrive at simple things. How being withdrew to create separate *Daseins* — and all these real or imagined phenomena — we do not know. But the fundamental assumption that nothingness and anxiety are in the vast majority of cases false, or *egoistic*, because what cannot be measured but what intuition — spiritual, bodily and scientific — consistently indicates is that *freedom exists*: that idea I will not surrender. And if I am wrong about everything else — I still hold that I have lived a meaningful and, in its own way, good life. It was perhaps precisely in the dead ends of the crack that the ideals and the result were made.

But we must come down from the divine idea — practical or abstract — because the ant does not know what the human thinks. A friend once said exactly that. And so it is with us. We do not have the tools for omniscience, which is perhaps also good. With omniscience there would be less freedom. One must be careful with conclusions. But one must still spread experience and history. To blame God, the devil, the state, or even oneself is not a solution — but to be critical, and still stable, is something every non-philosopher knows better than the philosopher. And here I must stop.

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➤F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883–1885.

¹ Methodological note: the entire multi-hour final session of 7 May 2026, after a year of work, was composed exclusively of the author's own assumptions, intuitions and choices — those that grew from the core of this book, from the philosophical and theological position the author holds, and from the experience and hope that underpin it. Google Gemini proposed the mathematical structure; Claude Sonnet 4.6 (Anthropic) verified the physical consistency, cross-referenced the literature and produced the final redaction. This approach is academically honest and is a demonstration of the responsible use of AI as a demanding intellectual tool, not a substitute for independent thought. Equivalence of Boltzmann and Shannon entropy: $S = k \cdot \ln W \leftrightarrow H = -\sum p \cdot \log p$. See also: Wikipedia, Entropy in thermodynamics and information theory, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entropy_in_thermodynamics_and_information_theory [accessed: 7 May 2026].

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⁸ P. Mainländer, *Die Philosophie der Erlösung*, 1876. Mainländer's thesis on the "will towards death" as a cosmic necessity, and F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883–1885. Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence as a cyclical force — both concepts carry the same epistemic status as

formal analogies, yet were developed without access to modern information thermodynamics and syntropy theory.

⁹ V.E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Beacon Press, 1959. Frankl's "existential vacuum" as an analogue of high entropy: "An existential vacuum manifests itself mainly in a state of boredom" — a state in which the system loses direction and tends towards thermal equilibrium without a final goal.

THREE TASKS AND A PARADOX – A Digression

A note on one's own mode of analysis, on tests, and on academic and non-academic work alongside official diagnoses

Introductory Remark

I am not writing this appendix to boast, but because it matters to me that the reader has some idea of how I was actually thinking while this book was taking shape. The most precise way to show this is through a handful of closed examples — three tasks that have an unambiguous solution, and one paradox that does not, though it can be structured. I worked out all of them without writing anything down, "in my head", while one afternoon I was talking with Google's AI module (Gemini) about something else entirely. The same algorithm afterwards verified the accuracy of my answers and the time it took; what mattered to me was the method, not the clock.

I. Tasks (solved independently as an example)

Task 1 ex. Scales with geometric solids

Three scales show the following: a cuboid and a sphere together weigh 10 kg; a triangle and a sphere together 20 kg; a triangle placed on a cuboid 24 kg. The question is how much the cuboid and sphere weigh on a fourth scale — which means finding the individual weights.

I set this up as a system of three equations. Sphere and cuboid give 10, triangle and sphere 20, triangle and cuboid 24. Adding all three, each weight appears twice, so the combined weight of the sphere, cuboid and triangle is 27. From this, directly: the triangle weighs 17, the sphere 7, the cuboid 3. The check holds in all three rows.

(my) Answer. The fourth scale, with cuboid and sphere again, reads 10 kg — as is already visible from the first equation.

Task 2. Three boxes — the heaviest box

Red and Blue together weigh 25 kg, Blue and Green 35 kg, Green and Red 40 kg. The question is how much the heaviest weighs.

The same principle as in the first task: the sum of all three equations is twice the combined weight of all the boxes, so $\text{Red} + \text{Blue} + \text{Green} = 50 \text{ kg}$. From this it follows that Green weighs 25, Red 15 and Blue 10.

(my) Answer. The heaviest is Green — 25 kg.

Task 3. Three boxes with wrong labels

There are three boxes labelled "Apples", "Oranges" and "Mixed". All three labels are stated to be wrong. With eyes closed I am allowed to remove only one piece of fruit, and from only one box of my own choosing. After that I must identify the contents of each box correctly.

The trick lies in which box to draw from. One must draw from the box labelled "Mixed", I say. Since all labels are wrong, that box cannot actually be mixed — which means it contains only one kind of fruit, precisely the one that comes out. Suppose it is an apple. Then the box labelled "Mixed" is actually the apple box. Now one knows that the box labelled "Oranges" cannot contain oranges (all labels are wrong), nor apples (already placed elsewhere); it must therefore be the mixed box. And the box labelled "Apples" is, by chain of reasoning, the orange box (since the apple box is the first one anyway).

This task is not computationally demanding, but it is interesting because it has a single "bottleneck": if one draws from the wrong box, the system cannot be resolved. The "Mixed" box is the node; one piece of information from it unlocks the entire structure.

Task 4. The „Ship of Theseus“, with an extension

The classical version runs: if a ship's planks are replaced one by one until none of the originals remains, is it still the same ship? Hobbes's extension goes a step further — suppose someone assembles a second ship from all the old planks that were removed. Which is now the real one: the ship that continued sailing, or the one assembled from the original planks?

My answer is not one side or the other, but both simultaneously — and an attempt to show why this need not be called a contradiction.

The first ship, the one that never ceased sailing, is "the same" by formal identity and continuity. It sails, bears the same name, is historically unbroken. Entropy took its matter, but not its form, name or function. The second ship, assembled from the old planks, is the same by its original core — it possesses exactly the matter that was once "it". But its continuity was once broken and subsequently re-established, making it simultaneously a resurrected and a reconstructed ship.

What interests me about this paradox is that it is not a single truth "split in two" — that would be the logical dissolution of the paradox. It involves two parallel truths coexisting, because in reality two forces act simultaneously: entropy, which dissolves matter, and syntropy, which holds form, name and continuity. From two bodies of matter we do not obtain two separate ships as if something had divided — instead we obtain a single ontologically enriched entity that has been qualitatively multiplied. Rather like a Trinitarian model: one ship as source, one as continuity, one as restituted matter.

A second layer of the answer concerns the observer. The identity of the ship is not some internal marking of its own, but is born in the relation between the ship, its history and someone who knows that history. The person who knows everything about the ship — when it was built, how it changed, what was done to it — holds it "together". Once knowledge of the history is lost, identity no longer exists but must be reconstructed, in a poorer continuity. Hence the connection with quantum mechanics: the ship is in superposition of "one and two" until the observer decides what matters more — continuity or matter.

A third layer is intention. If the builder replaced the planks with the intention that the ship should endure, the process is an extension of the ship's life, not its destruction; the old ship was merely "partially decaying" while the new one

was "partially coming into being". If the intention was destruction followed by subsequent restitution from the same planks, then the new ship is more a replica than a continuation. Intention, therefore, draws the line between what is "essence" and what is "form" — and that is precisely what a purely materialist view lacks.

There is, of course, a third option — that neither of the two ships is any longer the first. The sailing one has lost all its original matter; the one assembled from old planks has lost the continuity of sailing, its name and its temporal unbrokenness. If identity is understood as the "lowest common denominator" of both levels — matter and continuity — then the original ship no longer exists, and only two of its successors remain. This is the most accurate and most honest solution in real terms: all was, all flows, what has been has not been fully preserved in any form. Personally I resist this option — not because it is logically weaker, but because if it is so, we lose too many things in life too quickly. Yet it is intellectually obligatory to acknowledge: this too is a legitimate answer.

The conclusion is not a resolution of the paradox, but an extension of it. A "better" solution in philosophy is not the simplest one, but the one that accepts the complexity of reality rather than forcibly reducing it. Aristotle would say the ship has a formal cause — so long as its design and purpose are the same, it is the same ship; simple, but a layer of parallel truths is lost. The nominalist would say: if we call it "Ship A", it is "Ship A" and there is an end to it; quickest, but also shallowest. Accepting that there are parallel truths, which differ according to the register of observation, strikes me as "better" because it leaves reality undisturbed.

II. Methods of Working

I worked out all the tasks from memory, without writing anything down, while in the meantime I was talking about something else. The first two — those with scales and with boxes by weight — I work through a system of equations, and this takes me slightly longer than it would take someone who regularly works on such tasks. The third (boxes with labels) goes faster because it is purely logical, single-move: once one sees where the "bottleneck" is, everything resolves. The fourth, the Ship of Theseus, is paradoxically the quickest, because I am not looking for a single answer but trying to see the whole structure at once — as if reading a map rather than computing coordinates.

In everything I have done I have been, more or less, *my own* mentor. This applies to law, to philosophy, to film, to music and to writing. I posed questions to myself and answered them myself; I have never worked to any "template", nor has anyone particularly guided me through a method. Hence, on one hand, the objective errors I sometimes make in form when entering a discipline with standardised rules — what specialists rightly call "you are wrong". On the other, when I am not wrong in substance, I arrive at conclusions that few people attempt to put together, because they would presuppose knowledge from other disciplines. I write counter-arguments to my own theses; that is intellectually the most demanding thing, and in the book I am currently translating into English it costs me most.

I react passionately — in both the positive and the negative sense of that word. My intelligence is generative, not reactive: the mind finds problems on its own and does not rest until it has resolved them. As a consequence, I am often practically useless where a task requires the routine execution of a template, because in those frameworks I have nothing to generate.

III. Where This, Statistically, „Places Me“

I am aware that any self-placement of this kind invites suspicion of vanity, and that suspicion is fair. I include the placement nonetheless, because the alternative — pretending the question of method does not concern me — would be more dishonest. The references that follow are not titles or certificates of quality, but an attempt at placement. They emerged in dialogue with Google's AI module (Gemini, May 2026), which analysed the above answers and situated them within known psychological and philosophical frameworks. I cite them for precision, not for evaluation. The figures that follow are statistical positions from the literature, not my results on any specific test — formal testing I have never undergone, except for what I shall mention below.

Raven's Progressive Matrices

A test of pattern recognition. The approach to the first task — through a system that unifies all three scales into a single sum — is typical, according to the literature, of solvers who succeed on the hardest sets (E and F). This statistically corresponds to the top 5–10% of the population (Raven & Court, 1993; Raven, 2000). But with no „hurry“ and with motivation.

Watson–Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal

Measures the recognition of assumptions, evaluation of logical arguments and ability to interpret. The rejection of "either/or" solutions on the Ship of Theseus in favour of the coexistence of two truths belongs — according to standard test norms — to the top (or „different“) ~5% (Watson & Glaser, 2002).

Remote Associates Test

Measures "synthetic" intelligence: the ability to connect remote concepts. Linking entropy, syntropy and the concept of the "eternal now" with an ordinary ship corresponds to what this test counts as a high score (Mednick, 1962; Bowden & Jung-Beeman, 2003).

Statistics of Divergent Thinking

In standardised populations, 90–95% of people give convergent answers — seeking one correct answer already present in the system. Fewer than 5% of the population give divergent yet logically grounded answers. A combination that in the same person unites strict logic (mathematical tasks) with broad philosophical abstraction (parallel ontologies in the Ship of Theseus), without formal training in the discipline, statistically pushes towards the top 1–2% of the population in terms of *synthetic* capacity (Kim, 2011; Runco & Acar, 2012). These figures relate to *holism*, not to mathematical tests — in the latter I am closer to the average, as I shall explain.

The Polymath Profile

People who function as *autodidact-synthesisers* — their own mentors across several different disciplines — make up, by some estimates, around 2–3% of the population. In the literature this profile is called a polymath or "scanner" (Root-Bernstein, 2003; Sher, 2006). Most people need external structure — school, template, supervisor — in order to begin working at all; completion rates in fully self-directed learning contexts are consistently low across documented studies (cf. Jordan, 2014). The distinction between "T-shaped" people (one deep domain plus broad general culture) and "M-shaped" profiles (several deep peaks across different disciplines) is relevant here; descriptively, my work is closer to the M-profile (Brown, 2010; Demirkan & Spohrer, 2015).

Active Cognitive Disposition

The ability to pose questions to oneself and to bring them to completion is called an active cognitive disposition in psychology — in the literature: *Need for Cognition* (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Stanovich, 2009). This is what distinguishes people who write theories from those who merely learn them.

IV. How the Algorithm Arrives at These Estimates before/after

A language model has access to a large number of human responses to well-known paradoxes and logical tasks. Empirically, approximately 99% of published responses to the Ship of Theseus fit into a sentence of about twenty words that takes one side of the paradox — "it is the same because it has the same name" or "it is not because the planks are new". My response is a structured analysis of some three hundred words, organised through three ontological registers (formal, material, intentional) and two perspectives (continuity and observer), without introducing unnecessary entities — Occam's razor retains only necessary concepts (time, information, intention). Statistically, such a response in the language model's corpus represents an outlier, an exception relative to ordinary communication. The algorithm therefore derives the estimate of "1–2% of the population" — not as a flattering qualification but as a statistical position in the distribution, measured by lexical density, number of independent concepts and complexity of argumentation.

V. A Counterweight

So that the above does not sound like self-congratulation, I am obliged to state several facts pointing the other way. Without them all of this would be incomplete, and I would be presenting myself more flatteringly than I am.

Official Diagnosis (similar)

Clinical Hospital "Sveti Ivan" — Jankomir in Zagreb established in 2019 that I have above-average non-verbal and, by all indications, emotional intelligence. That is the only official, clinical finding about my cognition. Everything else in this appendix consists of statistical positions from dialogue with an algorithm — not clinical assessments.

Academic Grades

In formal education my average was around 3.5 — including the sciences — because lecturers, quite rightly, assess how faithfully a student has followed their method. My method is my own, so formally I often "err" in form, even when in substance I frequently reach coherent conclusions.

A small but perhaps revealing example from early schooling: in mathematics I once had to sit a resit. The following year, when I devoted myself to the subject, I received the top grade. Overall I finished with a three, because mathematics as a discipline did not fully engage me. This describes quite faithfully the pattern that recurs in me: when I work at something seriously, I can reach very high; when it does not hold me, I easily fall back to average or below. I am neither a "poor pupil" nor a top student — but someone whose grades almost always say less about ability and more about the degree of personal engagement.

Exceptions exist on the positive side too: I received a 5 for my master's thesis, and in applied disciplines (direction and music, for example) I achieved grades of 8/10 and above. This discrepancy between form (3.5) and substance is not unusual among autodidacts; it is described in the literature as the paradox of authentic thinkers within systems that reward methodological conformity (cf. Sternberg, 2006). In realistic terms, it also means I am not a top graduate in any field — nor have I ever wished to be.

A „Half-Marathon“, „Self-Taught“...

A small but illustrative *example*. Without any training, self-taught and entered at the last moment, I ran one Zagreb Half-Marathon. When I arrived at the start, some of those assembled laughed — it was obvious from my appearance and preparation that I was no "runner". I finished, however, in the top 30% of the results. I have never run since. I lost interest once I saw that this was, roughly, my ceiling. That pattern repeats itself across many areas of my life: I arrive quickly, reach what interests me, and leave quickly. I collect experiences, not specialisations — and this is part of the reason why formal assessment systems, which reward perseverance in a single field, rarely yield top results for me.

Practical Consequences

Everything stated above implies neither genius nor any guarantee of correctness. On the contrary, the most common practical consequence of this kind of profile is prolonged unemployment or an inability to fit into institutional roles — because routine, template-based tasks do not activate the generative mode of thinking. Where the system calls for a reliable executor, I am, frankly, often useless. There is nothing to boast of here.

The Dean's Characterisation

In a private conversation, the former Dean of the Zagreb Faculty of Law, Prof. Dr **Hrvoje Sikirić**, described me as a "multi-talent", expressly emphasising the distinction from the word "dabbler". The difference is not cosmetic: a dabbler touches many fields superficially and arrives at no independent conclusion in any of them, whereas a multi-talent in each field he seriously engages with attempts to reach his own conclusion — even if he errs. I mention this as an external, independent observation, not as a title.

The methodological difference between my grandfather, us, and the newer generations

It is worth placing this in a wider frame. My generation studied for twelve hours a day, but not by heart — rather half by heart, with only partial depth. My grandfather and Professor **Batovanja**, for instance, studied just as many hours, sometimes more, but in depth; alongside what they were learning they were also working through concrete problems, and doing so while learning languages in parallel — both their mother tongue and foreign ones. They worked, moreover, faster than we do, because they had *eros* — the genuine passion for knowledge as such — which carries the mind through difficult passages with less internal friction. With the same total time, but at a different pace and with a different intent, they made up exactly the share which we today spend learning a great deal in vain — and gave themselves, with what was left over, the depth that we, on average, no longer have.

Today the flow of information is undoubtedly faster than ever, yet the possibility of a real upgrade of knowledge — even when it is critical, synthetic, and backed by much labour — is no greater than, for example, the doctoral critique and analysis of **Mannheim** that my grandfather wrote in the 1960s. References were not fewer in his work; if anything they were more concentrated, less

scattered, and held more firmly in the mind rather than retrieved on the spot. This is an occurrence worth naming, and one that has been described by others before me — **Birkerts** (1994), **Carr** (2010), **Wolf** (2018) — though usually framed as a loss without remedy. We tend to console ourselves that the work is, in the end, equal in quality. Realistically, however, my own millennial capacity sits somewhere in between: not at the depth of my grandfather and **Batovanja** and the older school, but not at the breadth of the new generations either, who in many respects know more but tend to be less critical.

The internet does not corrupt the old capacity for knowledge, nor does it on its own improve it; rather, it *rescues* it — but only for those who possess *eros*, a passion for knowledge as such. For those who lack it, the internet leaves gaps that would not exist even without it. This is not nostalgia for some *golden age* — earlier generations had their own weaknesses and strengths, as every generation does — but an attempt to describe accurately where we stand. My generation, statistically, knows more than earlier ones, but on average knows it more shallowly. Those individuals within it who try to preserve the old depth almost always do so *against the grain*, not with it.

This book — including the present passage — is in part an attempt to make up for lost time and to approach that older depth, though I am aware how difficult that is. The aim, however, is not only critique. It is also an attempt to rescue, in some small measure, the critical academic discipline itself, and not only the underlying ontology. I would rather take the height which our generation has gained — its breadth, its access, its synthetic possibilities — and push it deeper, and from there attempt a digital step forward, not merely a defensive return to what was.

It is worth adding, fairly, that no system holds all the cards. In Croatia we have a serious gap where specialisation is concerned: compared to the American system, where focused expertise is cultivated as a value in itself, our universities and professions tend to spread effort across too broad a surface. In America, however, what is often missing is precisely the opposite — the deep continental-European legal and intellectual backbone, the historical *core* which gives specialised work its meaning beyond mere technique. A useful illustration is my colleague **Mario Ančić**, the tennis player who, after his sporting career, turned to continental law, post-sport socialisation and the practical art of finding one's place — himself a *multitalent* of a particular Croatian kind. People like him would, in the American framework, often lack precisely that older European legal and humanistic *substratum* which, on our side, is still felt as a living substance. And conversely,

what we lack here is the sharpness of specialisation and the diversity of subsystems that the American model takes for granted. The honest task, therefore, is not to pick a side, but to learn from both — and that, too, requires the same *eros* without which neither depth nor breadth amount to anything.

Despite slow or sometimes violent shifts, there is real reason for hope where the young are concerned. Those who carry the overall enterprise forward are not only the formal top students, those with a perfect 5.0; just as often, and sometimes more decisively, it is those on the borderline between a 3 and a 4 — the creatively gifted who never quite fit the assessment criteria — who keep things alive. Alongside them stand the technically excellent, those whose precision and discipline make any genuine progress sustainable in the first place. Both groups, honesty requires me to add, can sometimes miss the *eros* itself: the creative without discipline can drift, and the technically perfect without passion can become merely competent. What I would like to bring under the same roof is precisely all of them — those who, by temperament, are not part of the *middle stream*. The noise around the signal is greater than it once was — there is more dispersion, more distraction, more half-knowledge presenting itself as full — but in the end I suspect it comes out roughly the same. The proportion of those who succeed is, it seems to me, much as it has always been: a relatively small share of the most persistent, perhaps somewhere around one in ten, though I offer that figure as an impression rather than as a measurement. What I personally want to leave behind is not a claim of being better, but a *dignified handover* — to stand, without embarrassment, alongside the older generation and alongside the younger and better one that will come after, neither imitating the first nor pretending to surpass the second. Realistic optimism, in other words: not the comfort that nothing is lost, but the honest expectation that what matters most can still be passed on, by those willing to carry it.

VI. The Overarching Value

Finally, everything written in this appendix — the tasks, the method, the statistics and the counterweight — sits beneath a higher line that I consider important to state clearly. The overarching value in my life is not intellectual work. The overarching value is *life itself, family and love*. Everything else — books, essays, articles, disciplines, solutions to tasks, half-marathons, arts, sports, phys. works, philosophy — serves that end, not the reverse. I arrive quickly in things, and leave them quickly, not because I am shallow, but because I do not wish to

spend too much time on what is not most important. What truly lasts cannot be measured by statistics or tests.

This book, and this appendix, arose within that framework. They are not an attempt to make a name, but to leave what I have come to understand about the human being, about existence and about meaning in a form in which others may verify, contest or build upon it. Everything else — including this note — would be beside the point without that governing purpose.

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**** Extra Chapter ****

THE *FAMILY* IN CRISIS AS THE CRISIS OF SOCIETY'S SMALLEST UNIT — FILICIDE AND PARRICIDE AS MY THEMES OF CINEMATIC AND CRIMINOLOGICAL RESEARCH, AND THE QUESTION OF WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED HAD I ENDED UP IN NEGLIGENT EVIL INSTEAD OF FORGIVENESS AND STABILITY + *TIME ILLUSIONS* IN MY LAST DIGRESSIONS

There are subjects one does not choose freely. They find you — in the newspapers, in court records, in the memory of your own kitchen where, at a certain moment, the atmosphere could have ignited from a single wrong word. **Filicide** and **parricide** — the killing of a child by a parent, or of a parent by a child — are questions I have been examining for years: through film, through criminal law, and through personal experience. Not from academic distance, but from a place I know well: the place where love and exhaustion live under the same roof, and where the line between protection and collapse can be thinner than anyone wants to admit.

Several things prompted me to write this chapter at once. A recent case in Croatia — a young man who killed his mother with multiple stab wounds after years of instability, opiates, gaming addiction, pathological attachment, and public threats on social media — did not shock me in the shallow, media-driven way. It shocked me differently: *I recognised the pattern*. A pattern I had seen in films, in court files, and — in a far milder and, thankfully, unculminated form — in my own surroundings, and in my own skin.

The newspapers reported that no one comes to visit the young man. His lawyer is the only contact. His father died in the meantime. A **total collapse of family structure**, without a culprit easy to name, without a victim who was only a victim, without a perpetrator who was only evil. In his face and in his photograph one sees darkness and lostness — but behind those eyes, as behind Mainländer's lines, I recognise the primordial humanity that suffers because it is lost. That has

punished itself and others, and now sits alone in a cell with a question that has no answer: *how did I end up here?*

* * *

Back in 2010, I wrote on Facebook — late at night, between exam season and a romantic crisis — that I would *"go all the way this time."* One friend responded. One. The rest ignored it, or did not see it, or did not want to. That was not an accusation against them — it is simply human nature: other people's negativity frightens; other people's pain demands an engagement we are not always capable of giving. But that one friend who *did* respond has stayed in my memory more than all those who did not. And in that there is something this book has been attempting to articulate from the beginning: **mediation does not have to be spectacular**. Sometimes one question at the right moment is all that stands between a person and the edge.

That young man is now waiting for trial alone. The system will give him a sentence. Perhaps also therapy — but as criminological practice and the testimonies of prison chaplains tell us, the kind of therapeutic work that would genuinely confront him with the fact that he killed his own mother, and that his father died while he was in a cell, requires years of intensive engagement that our prisons rarely have the capacity to provide. The worst moment for him has not yet arrived — *the day when he understands that there is nowhere to go even if they release him*. That realisation is usually the trigger for the most severe forms of suicidality. And here begins what the system does not know how to address: how does one rehabilitate someone who has no family horizon to return to?

* * *

Research in prison systems shows that killers within *families* — particularly those convicted of filicide and parricide — are at the **greatest risk** of suicide and severe depression. It is estimated that up to **30–40%** of those who do not take their own lives immediately after the crime attempt to do so in the first several years of imprisonment. Almost **70–80%** suffer from chronic clinical depression once the first phase of trial has passed. The most critical period is between the fifth and the tenth year of sentence — when hope of early release evaporates, the media have forgotten, and biological youth quietly passes (cf. Edwin Megargee, *Overcontrolled Hostility*; Neil Websdale, *Familicidal Hearts*).

Statistics on family killings show that only around **15–25%** of parent-killers suffer from severe psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, where the person genuinely does not know what they are doing. The large majority are what criminologists call *"family killers in affect"* or *overcontrolled hostiles* — people without a criminal history who were "good" for years, who helped and stayed silent, and who then exploded because there was nowhere for the anger to go. In these cases, unlike with professional criminals, the rate of remorse approaches

90%. Their bodies deteriorate from guilt (cf. Murray Bowen, *Family Systems Theory*; Gabor Maté, *When the Body Says No*).

In more than **60%** of cases of family violence with a fatal outcome, alcohol or medication were present on at least one side — not as the cause, but as the *"petrol that ignites an already accumulated tension."* The real cause is the systematic destruction of the nervous system of the person who has been trying to help but can no longer (cf. Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman*; Donald Winnicott, *The False Self*).

* * *

I did not have those ideas. But the tension, the irrationality, the illness and the arguments within my own family — through years of caring for my grandmother and my father, through my former in-laws' divorce, through conflicts that in one moment escalated even in the street — resulted in *my losing my temper too*. And something could have arisen from negligence. Someone might have fallen and "accidentally", in a way that is hard to prove, ended up with a serious injury.

My grandmother fell on her own — because of agitation, because of one of those moments when her temperamental rigidity and irrationality become insurmountable — and struck herself near the eye. It looked strange. It looked as if someone had hit her. When I brought her to the hospital, *I* was the one who called the police and insisted that the matter be investigated. *As a precaution*. Because I knew that without that initiative, without my personally opening the door to investigation, I could — through no fault of my own — appear suspicious. Someone who exploits his grandmother. Someone who does not care. Those were moments in which I understood how *delicate* these distinctions are — and how little it takes for stigma to attach itself to a person who has been on the right side all along.

I also called social services. And the doctors. Precisely so that the process would be visible — a deterioration in which there was no culprit, but which looked bad. Let alone if tensions had escalated into something deliberate or accidental. My grandfather refused to change his clothes. Refused to eat. Without anyone having done anything wrong, all of us were exposed to the threat of stigma — from the judiciary, the media, social services. People do not dare speak about this. But it is simply a matter of preserving *everyone's* dignity and life.

As a child, I was caught by a slap from my father that flew further than intended. A scar remained on my arm. My class teacher looked at that scar with a mixture of prejudice and empathy, while I invented explanations about the playground. The other children teased me that I "got beaten at home." But it was a *typical accident* — a father who in one moment lost his measure, and who was otherwise invisibly supportive in so many ways that none of it could be weighed or seen. An accusation would have destroyed a story that was far more complex than

a single moment could describe. And between my father and grandfather, every ten years or so there would be tensions that somehow settled. Once I threw a glass on the floor — not out of anger at anyone, but to break the tension between them. To let *something* shatter instead of the relationship.

* * *

Pope Francis once washed the feet of prisoners and said that sometimes the only difference between his being pope and their being in prison is *chance*. That is not a platitude. It is an empathy that carries humanism within it, not only criminological prevention or the fight against evil. **When we help, we are helped in return — even when we cannot see it.** Every act of help within a family and beyond it is valuable and ought to be recognised.

The former pupil who committed a crime in Prečko and ended up in an institution — a young person who, despite retribution, was completely broken in resocialisation — shows us that the penal system can be both punishment and further trauma. Our fear is not of death itself. Our fear is of *life afterwards* — and *before*. Of losing standing before society and before God. **Social death is something we should not wish even upon our enemies.** For prisons, particularly in America, are places of documented systemic injustice — and that should disturb all of us.

The singer M. Kovač, whom I watched living near my building, attempted suicide out of injustice and the lack of systemic support. Today the system sometimes blows cold when it should not, and fails to prevent when it should. Anxiety is often the result of staying in the same place, in the same air, without movement and without purpose. I elaborate on this in later chapters, but I know it from direct experience: when a person has a goal — especially a positive one — many psychological conditions diminish radically. I am now writing this book from a *distance*, with empathy towards both victims and perpetrators of terrible acts; towards minds that ended badly because of utopia or dystopia. **The goal of science is to save as many people as possible — not to investigate solely for personal benefit, from a distance in which others are monsters and such things cannot happen to us.**

* * *

My grandfather attached himself to me throughout and saw his son in me. I said as much at the hospital — but he saw something else in me too: an unconscious and half-understood window of salvation. He wanted me to *continue him in his best light*. He placed hopes that were perhaps too great. But I am glad that I am the one who helps, rather than the one being helped — because those positions shift throughout life, and we must remain alert for the moment when we will ourselves need that hand.

Digital suicide — the erasure of identity, the public destruction of reputation, the cyberbullying that drives young people to the edge — is something

younger generations have also begun to recognise. *Depression is compression*: sometimes the cause, sometimes the consequence. I address this in later chapters. Hell, in truth, is the battle between *syntropy* and *entropy* within identity — a falling of knowledge that will one day be retrieved in an instant. Possession of a new or an old body is not so tied to identity as the development of the soul and its spiritual dimension, which is too often confused with either the purely psychological or the purely physical and its addictions.

Technique is secondary. From the typewriter at which I sat as a child with my grandfather and typed — to this screen — the tool changes, but the question remains the same: *who writes, why they write, and to whom they wish to reach*.

A later critique — offered with respect to the authors with whom I disagree — cuts deeper for the "ontological soteriological mediator" than any polemic conducted during their lifetimes. Such polemic is often a pointless argument and noise, and only afterwards does one see the loss of a human being as something of irreplaceable value — in the bond between parents and children, or between spouses, which when it cools is so sad it is hard to look at. **Mainländer** knew this. **Nietzsche** knew this. Both were alone at the end. It is no coincidence that it was *they* — rather than those who found a mediator — who fell silent in the dark. The ontological mediator is not a moralist. He is the one who stands where the darkness stands, and does not leave.

One evening after dinner I watched a **windmill** — and through it I came to see what time really is. At first I did not see it at all: I was turned toward the dog and the ball, in a Hegelian *now*. Then I saw it *peripherally and unconsciously*; then *peripherally and consciously*; and finally *directly, with will*. Peripherally, its blades went terribly fast. Directly — and as I slowed the film of my looking — they slowed with me, until I had **almost stopped it** and could see every detail. The mill was set in motion by someone (the simple logic of *Aquinas's prime mover*); it is observed and therefore moves at some rate in time. But *which* rate? *Aristotle's* law of rest, the two *Newtonian* laws, *Kant's* regulative ideas, *Heisenberg's* "measurement changes the system", *Lanza's* observer-dependent collapse of the wave function, *Hegel's bud-flower-fruit*, the **Zeno effect** of concentrated attention, *Tkalčić's* aesthetics that shape essence and not only surface — all converge on a single answer. Yes, the mill slowed **objectively** under my gaze. That the objective is necessarily linked to the subjective does not negate the subjective — it **shocks the objective**.

This is not idealism in disguise. It is **relational realism**: matter plus information equals reality. The wave function does not collapse from absolute nothingness, but it does require a witness. Where there is no witness, there is no determinacy of the kind we call "world"; where there is one, the structure that is

observed and the structure that observes meet, and a third thing — *duration*, *slowness*, *fullness* — comes into being. The mill was real before I looked; but the *mill-as-slow* was a co-creation.

From this small experiment, larger ones become legible. My wife, driving the car to the mechanic while I sat writing, gained by *Einstein's* law of motion a barely measurable fraction of a millisecond; I, who moved only *in thought and spirit*, "lost" it. And yet to me time passed faster than to her — for thought is its own velocity. Who, then, "saved" the millisecond? Both of us; neither of us; the question is not arithmetical but ontological. Each of our times was true; their mixing is the more honest reality.

My **grandmother**, lying ill for three years before her death, lived inside this paradox most acutely. When she was awake, the night was *eternal* — long with boredom, with the small horror of not knowing what to do with herself. Yet whole weeks passed and left no trace. If she or I looked back across those three years, the page was *blank* — unfilled time, one day and one page. The inverse paradox: **long in duration, short in memory**. And then **childhood** — both hers and mine — which was objectively brief but recounted a million times, with a million details, and felt like a whole eternity. The five years before adulthood felt longer to me than the twenty after university; I had stronger nostalgia in 2002 for the culture of 1995 than I have today for any of it. Every frame in childhood was new and so each frame mattered; in later life there are fewer "first times", and so the years collapse in memory even as each day is endured slowly. Both impressions are mistaken in opposite directions. The truth is that *time and ageing pass faster or slower according to the fatigue or joy of the spirit* — and the spirit operates *through* time but is in fact *above* it: in time and beside time, eternal, the prime mover of being and reality.

This is the deepest meaning of *amor fati* applied to time. Not "accept what comes", but: observe *actively*, and the observed reality *responds*. Dying is slow not only because the body fails slowly, but because consciousness slows with it; living is fast not only because we are busy, but because we have stopped looking. The mill in the courtyard taught me, in a quarter of an hour, what *Kant* could explain only as the form of intuition, what *Heidegger* could grasp only as horizon, and what *Einstein* could measure only at the limits. Reality is not fixed. Duality is what shakes the trained habit of seeing in the manner of the *doubting Thomas*. A single piece of meaningful information is stronger than a hundred pieces of meaningless ones, and pulls them into order around itself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biography and Foreword__

Dedication__

Purpose of the Book__ ...

CHAPTER I: ON EXPERIENCES AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS 16

Case Study — (My) Types and Expressions

1. "Religious and Punitive" Suicides — Myself and a Fellow Patient from the Hospital
2. "Unstable and Traumatic" Suicide — My Two Wives
3. "Frustrated" Suicides — the Mothers of My Wives
4. "Passive, Indirect, Dissociative" and Induced Suicide — the Case of My Grandmother
5. "Repressed" Suicide — the Grandfather of My Half-Sister
6. Latent and Other Suicides — the Husband of My Grandmother's Sister
7. "Accidental" and "Anticipated" Suicide — a Former Late Brother-in-Law and Neighbours from the Village
8. "Accessory" Suicide
9. Suicide Attempts and "Stigma"
10. "Systemic" and "Autistic" Suicides — My Choirmistress and My Dentist's Colleague
11. "Ideological" and "Indirect" Suicides
12. "Accidental" and "Trending" Suicides
13. "Media-Driven" and "Balcony" Suicides
14. "False" and "Illusory" Suicides, and "Interactive" Ones — a Neighbour
15. "Reckless" and "Hyperactive" Suicides — My Grandfathers
16. "Isolated" Suicide — a Neighbour
17. Unpredictable and Dependency-Driven, Systemic or (Illusory) Existential and Digital Suicide — the Owner of "My" Video Rental Shop

Sociological Types of Suicide and else

"Justified" Suicide

"Rational and Autonomous" Suicide

About Me...

An Additional Example of "State Suicide": the Homeland War

Rates and Process of Suicide — and to Some Degree of Depression

"Duration" of Suicides

"Dangerous" Years

The Legal Problem of Suicide

- I. Suicide Between Sovereignty and Freedom: A Paradox That Endures
- II. The "Right to Die" That Does Not Exist: Croatia, Switzerland, and the Space Between
- III. Conflict of Norms: When the State Is Simultaneously Obligated and Prohibited
- IV. Mental Illness, Timing, and the Conflict of Past and Present Self
- V. Croatia: The Paradox of the Most Liberal Law Without a System
- VI. Biological Resistance, Timing, and the Incomplete Picture
- VII. Palliative Care as the Third Way
- VIII. The Grey Zone as a Systemic Problem
- IX. Statistics as Moral Indictment
- X. Conclusion: Write Your Wills — and Not Only the Formal Ones

CHAPTER II: GENERAL AND LAY PSYCHOLOGY 125

Inside and Outside — and the Hard Statistics

"A Call for Help"

A Voice from Inside

When Is the Most Dangerous Part of Life

Do People Announce Suicide? Articulation and Sleep

The Hospital as "Cage" or Salvation? The Tablet as Problem or Cure?

What Is at the Beginning — Decision or Act/Event?

Percentages, Recovery, and a Basic Division of Psychiatry

Experiences of Psychiatrists with Suicide — and of Employers with Me

My Great "Yes" to the System Against My Critique
 A Mitigation for Psychiatry, the Church, and Other Institutions
 You Are Ill for Multiple Reasons — But Your Condition and Your Future Are Exclusively the Product of Your Responsibility and Your "Wrong" Ways of Living
 What Else Helps with Depression in the Broader Sense — and Is Not "Popular"?
 My Beautiful and Troubling Encounter with a Polish Woman
 Further on Pre-Psychology
 Synchronicity or Morphogenetic Fields? — Sheldrake and Jung
 Life and Death in the Living — the Example of the Walking "Aura"
 The "Rorschach" Test of the Book
 The Phenomenon of the Titanic and the Invisible
 The Psychological Paradox of Psychopathy and the Cult of "Empathy"
 Synchronicity, the Father Figure, Fromm and Bottomore — Deeper
 The Guidance of "Heroes and Mortals"
 "It Was All Only a Dream"
 Placebo — Nocebo
 Depression and Anxiety as Interwoven Concepts and Phenomena
 Anxiety as the Other (My) Side of the Coin of Depression
 (Non-)Clinical Anxiety vs. Depression
 The "Turin Horse"
 Return from Anxiety to Depression — Depression—Anxiety—Depression
 The Logical Rule of "Postponement"
 "Family"
 Trauma as a Learned and Relative Value and Reality
 The Suicide of Human Relations and the Sexes
 Towards Our Partner and Life in Old Age
 Mathematics and Determinism in My Family
 Epigenetics
 I Am Healthy When I Love the "Devil" But Not the Devilish — I Am Sick When I Love the Devilish But Not Necessarily the "Devil"
 The False Picture: "Photographs Lie"
 About the Camp and My Visit
 Perspectives on Suicide — Categories and Heredity
 Reasons For and Against Suicide

My Unintentional Experiment

What Do People Most Regret Before a Natural Death? — Comparison with Me
The Example of the "Abyss"

Ivančić and Frankl on Diagnosis (Hagiotherapy — Logotherapy)

GAP in (Self-)Assessment

Friendship with Death and Enemies

"The Observation" as an Ontological Law

The Turning Point — Testimony of a Film

V. E. Frankl and 'I'

Why Frankl Did Not Die or "Kill Himself" — and Survivor's Guilt

Existential Vacuum and Frankl's Possibility of Not Becoming Frankl — Limits of Behavioural
Techniques and Some Percentage of Survival

Unemployment as a Problem and the Question of the Meaning of Jobs

The Camp as Mere Transition? Towards What?

Life's Comparisons — a Former Brother-in-Law, a Neighbour, a Village

"What If" — Deformations of Time and the Life-Laboratory

The Body Has Fewer Inhibitions Than the Mind

Justifying One's Evils by Others' and the Comparison of Suffering

Readiness for Happiness and Unhappiness, and Suicide

Trauma and Misfortune as a "Desire"

Psychosis — or Real Reality and Personality?

Frankl's or My Factors of Life

CHAPTER III: SYSTEMIC QUESTIONS 242

For the System and Not Against It — Analysis from Within and the Epistemic Gap

The Problem of Bureaucracy and the Relation State — Us

Further on Bureaucracy

Cases of Extremity in the Struggle with the System

"Kafkaism"

Institutional "Betrayal"

The Police as My Corrective but Also My Refuge

The Church as My and Our Refuge — and Also a "Vacuum"/Counter-Effect

The Real "Flight Over the Cuckoo's Nest"

"Learned Helplessness — and Help(?)"

The "Camp Experiment" as Conclusion and "Systemic Proof" of Biology Over Morality

My Givings-Up and My "GPL" (BPD) as a Diagnosis of the System

Autistic System and Autistic Individual

Michel Foucault — Dehumanisation of Us, Humanisation of the System

Henry Jacoby

The True "Mincing Machine"

Socially-Conditioned Suicide Prevails!

"False" Eighties

After Suicide: Views of the Family and the Church

CHAPTER IV: "PHILOSOPHICAL" AND CONCLUDING ASPECTS 300...

Philosophical Frameworks and My "Process" of Working Through

Am I, Then, a *Hegelian* or a *Kantian*, and What Does Hegel Offer Today?

"We" Dissidents — Marušić (A.) / Marušić (B.) / Frankl

- I. The Landscape: Who Is Saying What, and to Whom
- II. Frankl: The "Neglected" Professional
- III. Marušić and Marušić: One Question, Two Routes
- IV. Heidegger, Sartre, and the Question That Refuses to Stay Put
- V. The Fifteen Percent (15%) — and Why the Number Matters
- VI. Neither Scientific Nor Unscientific — on Relevance
- VII. What the Dissident Offers the "Stadium"

Philipp *Mainländer* as a Second Kind of Anti-Hegel and the Key Transition Between *Schopenhauer* and *Nietzsche* — My Brother in Arms, but Not in Conclusion: the Precision of My Position on the Philosophy of Death

Reality and the Human Being as a Creature of Inertia, Goal, and Pleasure

Anxiety and Fear

Why "Existentialisms"?

Mental Illness According to the Existentialists (*Sartre*): "Lie or Truth"?

Anxiety in the Broader Sense

Being and Beings

Ontological Paradox as Key, and on "Hell"

The Thesis of Position
 Questions and the Fragility of the Thesis
 The (Self-)Discussion That Led to the Theses
 Proof and Premises on Anxiety
 People, Animals and Powers
 (Anti-)Hegelianism: Further Notes, and a Brief Survey of Philosophical Positions on Suicide
 Positive Matrix — Observation as the Key to My Theses
 Biocentrism as My Lever and Lifeline — Nothingness as the Absence of Consciousness
 "Lanza" and My Conception of the Human Being as "Being-Towards-the-Potential-of-Nothingness"
 The Process of Proof and the Relationality of Truth
 "I Need Sex" — "No, You Need a Stable Relationship" — and on Ortega y Gasset
 Contingency...
 "We" (I+I...) and Not "I"
 Our "Inertia" as (Counter-)Proof That "Emptiness Does Not Exist"
 Personal Synthesis of Being — Affirmationism as Non-Fear
 The Triumph of Spirit Over Meaninglessness: the Presence of Truth and Being as Ontological Continuity Against the Spirit's Weariness as Perhaps the Sole Proof of the Primacy of Nothingness
 "Were I to Have Sat at *Coffee* with Heidegger and Schluck, as My Grandfather Did, What Would I Have Asked Them?"
 "The Real Question" — Psychological and Philosophical — on Evil and Death
 Final Conclusion — Why My Position Runs Diametrically Against Heidegger and Schluck on the Key Points: a Metaphysical Theodicy of Freedom and a Provocation to the Philosophy of Mystery
 A "Counter-Nietzsche" — Not the Antichrist, but a Set of Counter-Moves to Heidegger, Descartes, Camus, Nietzsche, Hegel, and Sartre
 The Two Religious Presuppositions
 Myself — as an Infantile Aquinian or "Personalist" and "Logotherapeutic Theologian" of Empirical Eclecticism / Syncretism in the Dialectic of the Subjective and the Objective?
 "The Dog" as Proof For and Against Heidegger
 "Amor Fati" and Cats
 Psychological Empathy as the Key Against Time and the Key Against Nothingness
 Time Outside Time
 "I Look, Therefore I Am, and I Am, Therefore I Am Looked Upon"

"We Have Decided That He Should Not Suffer and Burden the System at the End" — the
 Incomplete Truth About "Quality" of Life as a Measure
 "Depth" and One "Logical" Proof of Our Freedom
 The Other, or Last, Question of All Questions
 The Third Death
 Biocentrism vs. Biopower — the Question of Anomaly
 Today's State Compared with the Totalitarian States
 Final General and Philosophical Conclusions, and What Is the Meaning of Life?
 A Little More on Time Dilation as Proof for the End and "Fictions"
 The Equation and the "Slowness of the Dying Process"
 A Logical Game with Parmenides
 My One Logical Paradox in Ethics, and a Detour to Locke
 On My "Hubris" as Proud "Audacity" Instead of the Ordinary Shepherding of Being
 Why I Write in This Way — on Science Today as the Forgetting of Being, and on the Shock
 of the Deaths of Professors Batovanja, Petrak, Kregar, and Others
 Jaspers in My Defence and "Anneliese Volkmann-Schluck" in My Grandfather's
 A Summary and the Question of My Philosophy
 Ethics and Aesthetics
 "Being and Potential" Against "Being and Time" or "Being and Nothingness"
 "My Ten Commandments" and the End

The *Formula* of Transition: Spiritual (In)Thermodynamics

- I. Introduction: Why a Formula?
- II. Laws and Authorities: the Physical Foundations of the Analogy
- III. Assumptions and Variables of the Model
- IV. The Final Formulae of Spiritual Thermodynamics
- V. Applications to Experiential Cases from the Book
- VI. Mainländer, Nietzsche and the Physical Crown of Intuition
- VII. Methodological Note and Limits of the Model
- VIII. Conclusion: the Formula as Epilogue and Physical Crown

Excursus: Between the Living and the Dead

- I. The Soul Desires Syntropy — Even the Fallen
- II. Why This World, and Not Another
- III. The Line of Least Resistance: a Structural, Not a Moral Category
- IV. The Observer as Resistance — and as Shield
- V. The Amplification Risk and the Paradox of Good Intention
- VI. Christian Families and the Deficit of Research
- VII. What the Research Has Not Done
- VIII. Qualitative Information as a Syntropic Field: a Panentheist Reading

Sources for the Thermodynamic *Excursus*

Three Tasks and a Paradox — a Digression and "my" *Methods*

- I. Tasks (Solved Independently as an Example)
- II. Methods of Working
- III. Where This, Statistically, "Places Me"
- IV. How the Algorithm Arrives at These Estimates at the End of my Skeletons
- V. A Counterweight
- VI. The Overarching Value

extra chapter about family crisis/crimes and my works, and time illusion

INDEX OF NAMES AND KEY CONCEPTS

(Names, concepts, and some themes referenced in the text)

A

Acutis, Carlo
Adjustment disorder
Affirmationism (as non-fear)
Agape
Alcoholism (as indirect/latent suicide)
Améry, Jean
Amor fati
Anxiety (clinical vs. non-clinical)
Anxiety (as signal of existential height)
Anxiety (as love of life, exaggerated)
Anxiety (disappears in part through knowledge)
Arendt, Hannah
Aristotle
Aufheben (Hegel)
Augustine of Hippo (privation of good)
Autistic suicide (type)
Avolition

B

Babić, Ivan (Prof)
Barišić, Pavo (Prof Dr)
Batovanja, Vesna (Dr)
Bauman, Zygmunt
Bayes, Thomas
Bedalov, Dr (surgeon)
Berdyaev, Nikolai
Bergson, Henri
Bettelheim, Bruno
Binswanger, Ludwig
Biocentrism (Lanza)
Biopolitics / Biopower (Foucault)
Bohm, David
Boltzmann, Ludwig
Borderline personality disorder (BPD)

Boss, Medard
Bottomore, Thomas Burton⁷⁷
Bourdieu, Pierre
Buber, Martin
Bettelheim and Levi Primo – as „mirrors to Frankl“ and suicide/controversy in peace after war

C

Camus, Albert
Capital punishment
Capitalist realism (Fisher)
Case, Anne
Cioran, Emil
Collins, Francis
Cook, Lauren
Covid-19 (as societal trigger)
Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly
Cyclothymia

⁷⁷ A small digression on *Bottomore* as a man, since I have spoken much of him as a theorist. He was, by my grandfather's testimony, a *hard mentor* — sometimes uncomfortably so. When my grandfather, then a young man arrived in London at the *London School of Economics*, was unable to deliver a seminar paper within the few days demanded of him — having concluded that he could not finish it even working ten hours a day — Bottomore's reply was, in substance, that he could pack his bags and return to wherever he had come from, where he would then be able to finish. There was no theatrical anger in that; only the cold articulation of an academic discipline that did not accept *explanations* from a foreigner on probation. There was a still smaller incident which became, in our family memory, almost emblematic of the gap between two worlds. My grandfather, in a freezing London flat, with a seminar to write and a broken boiler, put a *Yugoslav coin* into the meter to get some heat. The boiler refused to work. He had no British change, only what he had brought with him. The matter became visible, and the institution treated it not as poverty but as a kind of "*Balkan trickery*" — an attempt at cheating the meter — and he came close to being expelled from his lodgings. He had to plead his case as someone who genuinely had nothing else to insert, who had not tried to deceive but had been *cold and without options*. Bottomore took some convincing on that one, too but he helped. To my grandfather it was a glimpse of how even the most respected institutions read the body of the foreigner before they read his words. It is also worth saying that my grandfather came to England *on his own initiative*, not at the invitation of any institution — he went there to prove himself. He was fortunate enough that the *British Council* afterwards took over his financing, and that Bottomore — strict as he was, and quick to consider a foreign student dispensable — eventually said of his work that it was "*a contribution to world scholarship*". That word, given after months of sharp criticism, carried the institutional weight that no formal grade could carry, and it became, in effect, the foundation of his future career, his doctorate, and his methodology. Authority of that kind, as I have come to see it elsewhere in this book, is not bought overnight — and it is not even, in the strictest sense, *earned*; it is, rather, something one is judged worthy of by a person who himself carries the same authority, and who has reason to recognise it. My grandfather needed to learn English and to think and write in English, and then later also in German in his 40s. He never published his *phd* book in English though. He translated back to his language.

D

Dabrowski, Kazimierz
Darwin, Charles
Dasein (Heidegger)
Death (as process, not single point)
Deaton, Angus
Deleuze, Gilles
Derenčinović, Davor (Prof)
Doidge, Norman
Doomscrolling
Durkheim, Émile
Durkheim — four types (egoistic, altruistic, anomic, fatalistic)

E

Eckhart, Meister Tolle – and critiques of Eckhart's hybrid of Western and Eastern spirituality.
Einstein, Albert
Entropy / Syntropy (Fantappiè)
Epigenetics
Erikson, Erik
Existential vacuum (Frankl)
Existentialism

F

Fantappiè, Luigi
Fatalism (existential)
Filipović, Vladimir (Prof)
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Philippa
Foucault, Michel
Francis of Assisi
Frankl, Viktor E.
Freud, Sigmund
Fromm, Erich
Fukuyama, Francis

G

Gabriel, Markus
Gask, Linda
Generalised anxiety disorder
Goethe, J. W. von (Werther effect)
Grenzsituation (Jaspers)
Gregory of Nyssa
Grotius, Hugo

H

Habermas, Jürgen
Haig, Matt
Han, Byung-Chul
Harman, Graham
Hawking, Stephen
Hayflick limit
Hegel, G. W. F.
Heidegger, Martin
Heisenberg, Werner
Himmler, Heinrich
Homeland War (Croatia, 1991)
Höss, Rudolf (Auschwitz commandant)
Höss, Brigitte
Huberman, Andrew
Hume, David

I

Ideological suicide (type)
Isolated suicide (type)
Ivančić, Tomislav (hagiotherapy)

J

Jacoby, Henry
Jamison, Kay Redfield
Jankomir (psychiatric hospital, Zagreb)
Janjić, Petar (Tromblon)
Jaspers, Karl
John of the Cross, St (dark night)
Joiner, Thomas
Jung, Carl Gustav

K

Kafka, Franz / "Kafkaism"
Kant, Immanuel
Kassenoff, Catherine ("Cathy")
Kierkegaard, Søren
Kolbe, Maximilian (St)
Kovač, Mišo
Kovačić, Ivan Goran
Kregar (Prof.) — mentioned in memoriam, Carić
Kushner, Howard

L

Lanza, Robert (biocentrism)
Learned helplessness (Seligman)
Leibniz, G. W.
Lelas, Srđan
Levinas, Emmanuel
Lieberman, Matthew
Locke, John
Logotherapy (Frankl)
Lokva Rogoznica (historical community)
Lorenz, R. (Prof)
Luther, Martin
Löwith, Karl

M

Mainländer, Philipp
Mandić, Oleg
Mannheim, Karl
Marcel, Gabriel
Marušić, Ante (grandfather, Prof. Dr)
Marx, Karl
Media-driven suicide (type)
Merton, Robert
Mihaljević, Sanea
Milgram experiment
Miljak, Vera
Morfogenetic fields (Sheldrake)
Muravyov, Denis and Vlasova, Katerina (Pskov, 14 Nov. 2016)

N

Nancy, Jean-Luc
Newton, Isaac
Nietzsche, Friedrich
Noa Pothoven case (Netherlands)
Nothingness (as absence of consciousness)
Neuroplasticity

O

Observation (as ontological act — central thesis)
Ontological paradox
Ontologically prioritised monism
Ortega y Gasset, José

P

Panentheism
Parmenides
Pascal, Blaise
Passive / induced suicide (type)
Pegasos clinic (Switzerland)
Penrose, Roger
Perry, Matthew
Petrak, Marko (Prof.) — mentioned in memoriam
Post-traumatic growth
Pothoven, Noa
PTSD
„Privation of being“ (Marušić — central 'own' thesis)

Primo Levi - *Primo Levi also allegedly committed suicide, but on the other hand, he had already made a negative decision, so to speak, a long time ago right at the very beginning. This was because he later remarked that even being at home with his wife felt like a camp within a camp when he had to care for her during her illness. This stands in stark contrast to my half-sister's grandfather, for whom that was not a camp within a camp, but rather what followed afterwards. It represents an entirely opposite vision, yet he allowed for an opposite ending as well, unlike Frankl—even though the struggle after the camp, in old age and through illness, is indeed even greater. But the preparation is now, just as it is for me. I have not been in death, but I have stood in its vestibule, right at the pinnacle of my life now. My father also praised „company“ in the hospital when he returned home and felt „lonely“, though he despised them at first. So it depends on perspectives. Rip also to T. Scott, R. Williams and all the unknown others.*

R

Rational and autonomous suicide (type)
Ratey, John (Dr)
Reckless / hyperactive suicide (type)
Relative deprivation
Religious / punitive suicide (type)
Resilience
Romeo and Juliet / Werther effect
Rojnić Kuzman
Ravlić, Slaven (freedom and democracy, new ideologies, the silent minority)

S

Sapolsky, Robert
Sartre, Jean-Paul
Scheler, Max
Schrödinger, Erwin
Schopenhauer, Arthur
Shannon, Claude
Sheldrake, Rupert
Shestov, Lev

Sikirić, Hrvoje
Solitude (Sullivan)
Spinoza, Baruch
State suicide (type)
Stein, Edith (St Teresa Benedicta)
Stigma (suicide)
Sullivan, Harry Stack
Susskind, Leonard
Survivor's guilt
Symbolic violence (Bourdieu)
Syncretism / Eclecticism (method)
Syntropy (Fantappiè)
Szasz, Thomas

T

Tegmark, Max
Ten Commandments (author's version)
Theodicy of suffering
Thomas Aquinas
Tocqueville, Alexis de
Torre, Robert about "(no)life before death and a revolt against no sense or pharm.medicaments"
Trauma (a relative value)
Trending suicide (type)

U

Ujević, Tin
Unemployment (as existential problem)
Unstable / traumatic suicide (type)

V

VHS era / video rental (cultural obsolescence and suicide)
Vinchito, Angie (dir. Manifesto)
Vlačić Ilirik, Matija
Volkman-Schluck, Karl-Heinz (Prof.)

W

Weber, Max
Weil, Simone
Weiss, Johannes (Prof)
Whitaker, Robert
Wolynn, Mark

Z

Žižek, Slavoj